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THE DUKE'S CHILDREN

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BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOL. I

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	When the Duchess was Dead	1
II.	Lady Mary Palliser	12
III.	Francis Oliphant Tregear	25
IV.	Park Lane	34
V.	"It is Impossible."	44
VI.	Major Tifto	58
VII.	Conservative Convictions	69
VIII.	"He is a Gentleman."	79
IX.	"In Medias Res."	89
X.	"Why not like a Romeo if I feel like a Romeo?"	101
XI.	"Cruel."	110
XII.	At Richmond	120
XIII.	The Duke's Injustice	131
XIV.	The New Member for Silverbridge	136
XV.	The Duke receives a Letter,—and writes one	149
XVI.	"Poor Boy!"	161
XVII.	The Derby	169
XVIII.	One of the Results of the Derby	181
XIX.	"No, my Lord, I do not."	191
XX.	"Then he will come again."	201

CHAPTER PAGE
XXI. Sir Timothy Beeswax 211
XXII. The Duke in his Study 218
XXIII. Frank Tregear wants a Friend 231
XXIV. "She must be Made to Obey." 240
XXV. A Family Breakfast-table 249
XXVI. Dinner at the Beargarden 259

THE DUKE'S CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN THE DUCHESS WAS DEAD.

No one, probably, ever felt himself to be more alone in the world than our old friend, the Duke of Omnium, when the Duchess died. When this sad event happened he had ceased to be Prime Minister. During the first nine months after he had left office he and the Duchess remained in England. Then they had gone abroad, taking with them their three children. The eldest, Lord Silverbridge, had been at Oxford, but had had his career there cut short by some more than ordinary youthful folly, which had induced his father to agree with the college authorities that his name had better be taken off the college books,—all which had been cause of very great sorrow to the Duke. The other boy was to go to Cambridge; but his father had thought it well to give him a twelve-months' run on the Continent, under his own inspection. Lady Mary, the only daughter, was the youngest of the family, and she also had been with them on the Continent. They remained the full year abroad, travelling with a large accompaniment of tutors, lady's-maids, couriers, and sometimes

friends. I do not know that the Duchess or the Duke had enjoyed it much; but the young people had seen something of foreign courts and much of foreign scenery, and had perhaps perfected their French. The Duke had gone to work at his travels with a full determination to create for himself occupation out of a new kind of life. He had studied Dante, and had striven to arouse himself to ecstatic joy amidst the loveliness of the Italian lakes. But through it all he had been aware that he had failed. The Duchess had made no such resolution,—had hardly, perhaps, made any attempt; but, in truth, they had both sighed to be back among the war-trumpets. They had both suffered much among the trumpets, and yet they longed to return. He told himself from day to day, that though he had been banished from the House of Commons, still, as a peer, he had a seat in Parliament; and that, though he was no longer a Minister, still he might be useful as a legislator. She, in her career as a leader of fashion, had no doubt met with some trouble,—with some trouble but with no disgrace; and as she had been carried about among the lakes and mountains, among the pictures and statues, among the counts and countesses, she had often felt that there was no happiness except in that dominion which circumstances had enabled her to achieve once, and might enable her to achieve again—in the realms of London society.

Then, in the early spring of 187–, they came back to England, having persistently carried out their project, at any rate in regard to time. Lord Gerald, the younger son, was at once sent up to Trinity. For the elder son a seat was to be found in the House of Commons, and the fact that a dissolution of Parliament was

expected served to prevent any prolonged sojourn abroad. Lady Mary Palliser was at that time nineteen, and her entrance into the world was to be her mother's great care and great delight. In March they spent a few days in London, and then went down to Matching Priory. When she left town the Duchess was complaining of cold, sore throat, and debility. A week after their arrival at Matching she was dead.

Had the heavens fallen and mixed themselves with the earth; had the people of London risen in rebellion with French ideas of equality; had the Queen persistently declined to comply with the constitutional advice of her Ministers; had a majority in the House of Commons lost its influence in the country,—the utter prostration of the bereft husband could not have been more complete. It was not only that his heart was torn to pieces, but that he did not know how to look out into the world. It was as though a man should be suddenly called upon to live without hands or even arms. He was helpless, and knew himself to be helpless. Hitherto he had never specially acknowledged to himself that his wife was necessary to him as a component part of his life. Though he had loved her dearly, and had in all things consulted her welfare and happiness, he had at times been inclined to think that in the exuberance of her spirits she had been a trouble rather than a support to him. But now it was as though all outside appliances were taken away from him. There was no one of whom he could ask a question.

For it may be said of this man that, though throughout his life he had had many honourable and right honourable friends, and that, though he had entertained

guests by the score, and though he had achieved for himself the respect of all good men and the thorough admiration of some few who knew him, he had hardly made for himself a single intimate friend—except that one who had now passed away from him. To her he had been able to say what he thought, even though she would occasionally ridicule him while he was declaring his feelings. But there had been no other human soul to whom he could open himself. There was one or two whom he loved, and perhaps liked; but his loving and his liking had been exclusively political. He had so habituated himself to devote his mind and his heart to the service of his country, that he had almost risen above or sunk below humanity. But she, who had been essentially human, had been a link between him and the world.

There were his three children, the youngest of whom was now nearly nineteen, and they surely were links! At the first moment of his bereavement they were felt to be hardly more than burdens. A more loving father there was not in England, but nature had made him so undemonstrative that as yet they had hardly known his love. In all their joys and in all their troubles, in all their desires and all their disappointments, they had ever gone to their mother. She had been conversant with everything about them, from the boys' bills and the girl's gloves to the innermost turn in the heart and disposition of each. She had known with the utmost accuracy the nature of the scrapes into which Lord Silverbridge had precipitated himself, and had known also how probable it was that Lord Gerald would do the same. The results of such scrapes she, of course, deplored; and therefore she would give good counsel,

pointing out how imperative it was that such evil-doings should be avoided; but with the spirit that produced the scrapes she fully sympathised. The father disliked the spirit almost worse than the results; and was therefore often irritated and unhappy.

And the difficulties about the girl were almost worse to bear than those about the boys. She had done nothing wrong. She had given no signs of extravagance or other juvenile misconduct. But she was beautiful and young. How was he to bring her out into the world? How was he to decide whom she should or whom she should not marry? How was he to guide her through the shoals and rocks which lay in the path of such a girl before she can achieve matrimony?

It was the fate of the family that, with a world of acquaintance, they had not many friends. From all close connection with relatives on the side of the Duchess they had been dissevered by old feelings at first, and afterwards by want of any similitude in the habits of life. She had, when young, been repressed by male and female guardians with an iron hand. Such repression had been needed, and had been perhaps salutary, but it had not left behind it much affection. And then her nearest relatives were not sympathetic with the Duke. He could obtain no assistance in the care of his girl from that source. Nor could he even do it from his own cousins' wives, who were his nearest connections on the side of the Pallisers. They were women to whom he had ever been kind, but to whom he had never opened his heart. When, in the midst of the stunning sorrow of the first week, he tried to think of all this, it seemed to him that there was nobody.

There had been one lady, a very dear ally, staying

in the house with them when the Duchess died. This was Mrs. Finn, the wife of Phineas Finn, who had been one of the Duke's colleagues when in office. How it had come to pass that Mrs. Finn and the Duchess had become singularly bound together has been told elsewhere. But there had been close bonds,—so close that when the Duchess on their return from the Continent had passed through London on her way to Matching, ill at the time and very comfortless, it had been almost a thing of course that Mrs. Finn should go with her. And as she had sunk, and then despaired, and then died, it was this woman who had always been at her side, who had ministered to her, and had listened to the fears and the wishes and hopes she had expressed respecting the children.

At Matching, amidst the ruins of the old Priory, there is a parish burying-ground, and there, in accordance with her own wish, almost within sight of her own bedroom window, she was buried. On the day of the funeral a dozen relatives came, Pallisers and M'Closkies, who on such an occasion were bound to show themselves, as members of the family. With them and his two sons the Duke walked across to the graveyard, and then walked back; but even to those who stayed the night at the house he hardly spoke. By noon on the following day they had all left him, and the only stranger in the house was Mrs. Finn.

On the afternoon of the day after the funeral the Duke and his guest met, almost for the first time since the sad event. There had been just a pressure of the hand, just a glance of compassion, just some murmur of deep sorrow,—but there had been no real speech between them. Now he had sent for her, and she went

down to him in the room in which he commonly sat at work. He was seated at his table when she entered, but there was no book open before him, and no pen ready to his hand. He was dressed of course in black. That, indeed, was usual with him, but now the tailor by his funeral art had added some deeper dye of blackness to his appearance. When he rose and turned to her she thought that he had at once become an old man. His hair was grey in parts, and he had never accustomed himself to use that skill in managing his outside person by which many men are able to preserve for themselves a look, if not of youth, at any rate of freshness. He was thin, of an adust complexion, and had acquired a habit of stooping which, when he was not excited, gave him an appearance of age. All that was common to him; but now it was so much exaggerated that he who was not yet fifty might have been taken to be over sixty.

He put out his hand to greet her as she came up to him. "Silverbridge," he said, "tells me that you go back to London to-morrow."

"I thought it would be best, Duke. My presence here can be of no comfort to you."

"I will not say that anything can be of comfort. But of course it is right that you should go. I can have no excuse for asking you to remain. While there was yet a hope for her——" Then he stopped, unable to say a word further in that direction, and yet there was no sign of a tear and no sound of a sob.

"Of course I would stay, Duke, if I could be of any service."

"Mr. Finn will expect you to return to him."

"Perhaps it would be better that I should say that

I would stay were it not that I know that I can be of no real service."

"What do you mean by that, Mrs. Finn?"

"Lady Mary should have with her at such a time some other friend."

"There was none other whom her mother loved as she loved you—none, none." This he said almost with energy.

"There was no one lately, Duke, with whom circumstances caused her mother to be so closely intimate. But even that perhaps was unfortunate."

"I never thought so."

"That is a great compliment. But as to Lady Mary, will it not be well that she should have with her, as soon as possible, some one,—perhaps some one of her own kindred if it be possible, or, if not that, at least one of her own kind."

"Who is there? Whom do you mean?"

"I mean no one. It is hard, Duke, to say what I do mean, but perhaps I had better try. There will be, —probably there have been,—some among your friends who have regretted the great intimacy which chance produced between me and my lost friend. While she was with us no such feeling would have sufficed to drive me from her. She had chosen for herself, and if others disapproved her choice that was nothing to me. But as regards Lady Mary, it will be better, I think, that from the beginning she should be taught to look for friendship and guidance to those—to those who are more naturally connected with her."

"I was not thinking of any guidance," said the Duke.

"Of course not. But with one so young, where

there is intimacy there will be guidance. There should be somebody with her. It was almost the last thought that occupied her mother's mind. I could not tell her, Duke, but I can tell you, that I cannot with advantage to your girl be that somebody."

"Cora wished it."

"Her wishes, probably, were sudden and hardly fixed."

"Who should it be, then?" asked the father, after a pause.

"Who am I, Duke, that I should answer such a question?"

After that there was another pause, and then the conference was ended by a request from the Duke that Mrs. Finn would stay at Matching for yet two days longer. At dinner they all met,—the father, the three children, and Mrs. Finn. How far the young people among themselves had been able to throw off something of the gloom of death need not here be asked; but in the presence of their father they were sad and sombre, almost as he was. On the next day, early in the morning, the younger lad returned to his college, and Lord Silverbridge went up to London, where he was supposed to have his home.

"Perhaps you would not mind reading these letters," the Duke said to Mrs. Finn, when she again went to him, in compliance with a message from him asking for her presence. Then she sat down and read two letters, one from Lady Cantrip, and the other from a Mrs. Jeffrey Palliser, each of which contained an invitation for his daughter, and expressed a hope that Lady Mary would not be unwilling to spend some time with the writer. Lady Cantrip's letter was long, and went

minutely into circumstances. If Lady Mary would come to her, she would abstain from having other company in the house till her young friend's spirits should have somewhat recovered themselves. Nothing could be more kind, or proposed in a sweeter fashion. There had, however, been present to the Duke's mind as he read it a feeling that a proposition to a bereaved husband to relieve him of the society of an only daughter, was not one which would usually be made to a father. In such a position a child's company would probably be his best solace. But he knew, —at this moment he painfully remembered,—that he was not as are other men. He acknowledged the truth of this, but he was not the less grieved and irritated by the reminder. The letter from Mrs. Jeffrey Palliser was to the same effect, but was much shorter. If it would suit Mary to come to them for a month or six weeks at their place in Gloucestershire, they would both be delighted.

"I should not choose her to go there," said the Duke, as Mrs. Finn refolded the latter letter. "My cousin's wife is a very good woman, but Mary would not be happy with her."

"Lady Cantrip is an excellent friend for her."

"Excellent. I know no one whom I esteem more than Lady Cantrip."

"Would you wish her to go there, Duke?"

There came a wistful piteous look over the father's face. Why should he be treated as no other father would be treated? Why should it be supposed that he would desire to send his girl away from him? But yet he felt that it would be better that she should go. It was his present purpose to remain at Matching through

a portion of the summer. What could he do to make a girl happy? What comfort would there be in his companionship?

"I suppose she ought to go somewhere," he said.

"I had not thought of it," said Mrs. Finn.

"I understood you to say," replied the Duke, almost angrily, "that she ought to go to some one who would take care of her."

"I was thinking of some friend coming to her."

"Who would come? Who is there that I could possibly ask? You will not stay."

"I certainly would stay, if it were for her good. I was thinking, Duke, that perhaps you might ask the Greys to come to you."

"They would not come," he said, after a pause.

"When she was told that it was for her sake, she would come, I think."

Then there was another pause. "I could not ask them," he said; "for his sake I could not have it put to her in that way. Perhaps Mary had better go to Lady Cantrip. Perhaps I had better be alone here for a time. I do not think that I am fit to have any human being here with me in my sorrow."

CHAPTER II.

LADY MARY PALLISER.

It may as well be said at once that Mrs. Finn knew something of Lady Mary which was not known to the father, and which she was not yet prepared to make known to him. The last winter abroad had been passed at Rome, and there Lady Mary Palliser had become acquainted with a certain Mr. Tregear,—Francis Oliphant Tregear. The Duchess, who had been in constant correspondence with her friend, had asked questions by letter as to Mr. Tregear, of whom she had only known that he was the younger son of a Cornish gentleman, who had become Lord Silverbridge's friend at Oxford. In this there had certainly been but little to recommend him to the intimacy of such a girl as Lady Mary Palliser. Nor had the Duchess, when writing, ever spoken of him as a probable suitor for her daughter's hand. She had never connected the two names together. But Mrs. Finn had been clever enough to perceive that the Duchess had become fond of Mr. Tregear, and would willingly have heard something to his advantage. And she did hear something to his advantage,—something also to his disadvantage. At his mother's death this young man would inherit a property amounting to about fifteen hundred a year. "And I am told," said Mrs. Finn, "that he is quite likely to spend his money before it comes to him." There had been nothing more written specially about

Mr. Tregear; but Mrs. Finn had feared not only that the young man loved the girl, but that the young man's love had in some imprudent way been fostered by the mother.

Then there had been some fitful confidence during those few days of acute illness. Why should not the girl have the man if he were lovable? And the Duchess referred to her own early days when she had loved, and to the great ruin which had come upon her heart when she had been severed from the man she had loved. "Not but that it has been all for the best," she had said. "Not but that Plantagenet has been to me all that a husband should be. Only if she can be spared what I suffered, let her be spared." Even when these things had been said to her, Mrs. Finn had found herself unable to ask questions. She could not bring herself to inquire whether the girl had in truth given her heart to this young Tregear. The one was nineteen and the other as yet but two-and-twenty! But though she asked no questions she almost knew that it must be so. And she knew also that the father, as yet, was quite in the dark on the matter. How was it possible that in such circumstances she should assume the part of the girl's confidential friend and monitress? Were she to do so she must immediately tell the father everything. In such a position no one could be a better friend than Lady Cantrip, and Mrs. Finn had already almost made up her mind that, should Lady Cantrip occupy the place, she would tell her ladyship all that had passed between herself and the Duchess on the subject.

Of what hopes she might have, or what fears, about her girl, the Duchess had said no word to her husband.

But when she had believed that the things of the world were fading away from her, and when he was sitting by her bedside,—dumb, because at such a moment he knew not how to express the tenderness of his heart, —holding her hand, and trying so to listen to her words, that he might collect and remember every wish, she had murmured something about the ultimate division of the great wealth with which she herself had been endowed. "She had never," she said, "even tried to remember what arrangements had been made by lawyers, but she hoped that Mary might be so circumstanced, that if her happiness depended on marrying a poor man, want of money need not prevent it." The Duke, suspecting nothing, believing this to be a not unnatural expression of maternal interest, had assured her that Mary's fortune would be ample.

Mrs. Finn made the proposition to Lady Mary in respect to Lady Cantrip's invitation. Lady Mary was very like her mother, especially in having exactly her mother's tone of voice, her quick manner of speech, and her sharp intelligence. She had also her mother's eyes, large and round, and almost blue, full of life and full of courage, eyes which never seemed to quail, and her mother's dark brown hair, never long but very copious in its thickness. She was, however, taller than her mother, and very much more graceful in her movement. And she could already assume a personal dignity of manner which had never been within her mother's reach. She had become aware of a certain brusqueness of speech in her mother, a certain aptitude to say sharp things without thinking whether the sharpness was becoming to the position which she held, and, taking advantage of the example, the girl had already

learned that she might gain more than she would lose by controlling her words.

"Papa wants me to go to Lady Cantrip?" she said.

"I think he would like it,—just for the present, Lady Mary."

Though there had been the closest possible intimacy between the Duchess and Mrs. Finn, this had hardly been so as to the intercourse between Mrs. Finn and the children. Of Mrs. Finn it must be acknowledged that she was, perhaps fastidiously, afraid of appearing to take advantage of her friendship with the Duke's family. She would tell herself that though circumstances had compelled her to be the closest and nearest friend of a Duchess, still her natural place was not among dukes and their children, and therefore in her intercourse with the girl she did not at first assume the manner and bearing which her position in the house would have seemed to warrant. Hence the "Lady Mary."

"Why does he want to send me away, Mrs. Finn?"

"It is not that he wants to send you away, but that he thinks it will be better for you to be with some friend. Here you must be so much alone."

"Why don't you stay? But I suppose Mr. Finn wants you to be back in London."

"It is not that only, or, to speak the truth, not that at all. Mr. Finn could come here if it were suitable. Or for a week or two he might do very well without me. But there are other reasons. There is no one whom your mother respected more highly than Lady Cantrip."

"I never heard her speak a word of Lady Cantrip."

"Both he and she are your father's intimate friends."

"Does papa want to be—alone here?"

"It is you, not himself, of whom he is thinking."

"Therefore I must think of him, Mrs. Finn. I do not wish him to be alone. I am sure it would be better that I should stay with him."

"He feels that it would not be well that you should live without the companionship of some lady."

"Then let him find some lady. You would be the best, because he knows you so well. I, however, am not afraid of being alone. I am sure he ought not to be here quite by himself. If he bids me go, I must go, and then of course I shall go where he sends me; but I won't say that I think it best that I should go, and certainly I do not want to go to Lady Cantrip." This she said with great decision, as though the matter was one on which she had altogether made up her mind. Then she added, in a lower voice: "Why does n't papa speak to me about it?"

"He is thinking only of what may be best for you."

"It would be best for me to stay near him. Whom else has he got?"

All this Mrs. Finn repeated to the Duke as closely as she could, and then of course the father was obliged to speak to his daughter. "Don't send me away, papa," she said at once.

"Your life here, Mary, will be inexpressibly sad."

"It must be sad anywhere. I cannot go to college, like Gerald, or live anywhere, just as I please, like Silverbridge."

"Do you envy them that?"

"Sometimes, papa. Only I shall think more of poor mamma by being alone, and I should like to be thinking of her always." He shook his head mournfully.

"I do not mean that I shall always be unhappy, as I am now."

"No, dear; you are too young for that. It is only the old who suffer in that way."

"You will suffer less if I am with you; won't you, papa? I do not want to go to Lady Cantrip. I hardly remember her at all."

"She is very good."

"Oh yes. That is what they used to say to mamma about Lady Midlothian. Papa, pray do not send me to Lady Cantrip."

Of course it was decided that she should not go to Lady Cantrip at once, or to Mrs. Jeffrey Palliser, and, after a short interval of doubt, it was decided also that Mrs. Finn should remain at Matching for at least a fortnight. The Duke declared that he would be glad to see Mr. Finn, but she knew that in his present mood the society of any one man, to whom he would feel himself called upon to devote his time, would be a burden to him, and she plainly said that Mr. Finn had better not come to Matching at present. "There are old associations," she said, "which will enable you to bear with me as you will with your butler or your groom, but you are not as yet quite able to make yourself happy with company." This he bore with perfect equanimity, and then, as it were, handed over his daughter to Mrs. Finn's care.

Very quickly there came to be close intimacy between Mrs. Finn and Lady Mary. For a day or two the elder woman, though the place she filled was one of absolute confidence, rather resisted than encouraged the intimacy. She always remembered that the girl was the daughter of a great duke, and that her position

in the house had sprung from circumstances which would not, perhaps, in the eyes of the world at large, have recommended her for such friendship. She knew, —the reader may possibly know,—that nothing had ever been purer, nothing more disinterested, than her friendship. But she knew also,—no one knew better, —that the judgment of men and women does not always run parallel with facts. She entertained, too, a conviction in regard to herself, that hard words and hard judgments were to be expected from the world, —were to be accepted by her without any strong feeling of injustice,—because she had been elevated by chance to the possession of more good things than she had merited. She weighed all this with a very fine balance, and even after the encouragement she had received from the Duke, was intent on confining herself to some position about the girl inferior to that which such a friend as Lady Cantrip might have occupied. But the girl's manner and the girl's speech about her own mother overcame her. It was the unintentional revelation of the Duchess's constant reference to her, —the way in which Lady Mary would assert that "Mamma used always to say this of you; mamma always knew that you would think so and so; mamma used to say that you had told her." It was the feeling thus conveyed, that the mother who was now dead had in her daily dealings with her own child spoken of her as her nearest friend, which mainly served to conquer the deference of manner which she had assumed.

Then gradually there came confidences,—and at last absolute confidence. The whole story about Mr. Tregear was told. Yes; she loved Mr. Tregear. She had given him her heart, and had told him so.

"Then, my dear, your father ought to know it," said Mrs. Finn.

"No; not yet. Mamma knew it."

"Did she know all that you have told me?"

"Yes; all. And Mr. Tregear spoke to her, and she said that papa ought not to be told quite yet." Mrs. Finn could not but remember that the friend she had lost was not, among women, the one best able to give a girl good counsel in such a crisis.

"Why not yet, dear?"

"Well, because——. It is very hard to explain. In the first place, because Mr. Tregear himself does not wish it."

"That is a very bad reason; the worst in the world."

"Of course you will say so. Of course everybody would say so. But when there is one person whom one loves better than all the rest, for whom one would be ready to die, to whom one is determined that everything shall be devoted, surely the wishes of a person so dear as that ought to have weight."

"Not in persuading you to do that which is acknowledged to be wrong."

"What wrong? I am going to do nothing wrong."

"The very concealment of your love is wrong, after that love has been not only given but declared. A girl's position in such matters is so delicate, especially that of such a girl as you!"

"I know all about that," said Lady Mary, with something almost approaching to scorn in her tone. "Of course I have to be—delicate. I don't quite know what the word means. I am not a bit ashamed of being in love with Mr. Tregear. He is a gentleman, highly educated, very clever, of an old family,—older,

I believe, than papa's. And he is manly and handsome; just what a young man ought to be. Only he is not rich."

"If he be all that you say, ought you not to trust your papa? If he approve of it, he could give you money."

"Of course he must be told; but not now. He is nearly broken-hearted about dear mamma. He could not bring himself to care about anything of that kind at present. And then it is Mr. Tregear that should speak to him first."

"Not now, Mary."

"How do you mean not now?"

"If you had a mother you would talk to her about it."

"Mamma knew."

"If she were still living she would tell your father."

"But she did n't tell him though she did know. She did n't mean to tell him quite yet. She wanted to see Mr. Tregear here in England first. Of course I shall do nothing till papa does know."

"You will not see him?"

"How can I see him here? He will not come here, if you mean that."

"You do not correspond with him?" Here for the first time the girl blushed. "Oh, Mary, if you are writing to him your father ought to know it."

"I have not written to him; but when he heard how ill poor mamma was, then he wrote to me—twice. You may see his letters. It is all about her. No one worshipped mamma as he did."

Gradually the whole story was told. These two young persons considered themselves to be engaged, but had agreed that their engagement should not be

made known to the Duke till something had occurred, or some time had arrived, as to which Mr. Tregear was to be the judge. In Mrs. Finn's opinion nothing could be more unwise, and she said much to induce the girl to confess everything to her father at once. But in all her arguments she was opposed by the girl's reference to her mother. "Mamma knew it." And it did certainly seem to Mrs. Finn as though the mother had assented to this imprudent concealment. When she endeavoured, in her own mind, to make excuse for her friend, she felt almost sure that the Duchess, with all her courage, had been afraid to propose to her husband that their daughter should marry a commoner without an income. But in thinking of all that, there could now be nothing gained. What ought she to do —at once? The girl, in telling her, had exacted no promise of secrecy, nor would she have given any such promise; but yet she did not like the idea of telling the tale behind the girl's back. It was evident that Lady Mary had considered herself to be safe in confiding her story to her mother's old friend. Lady Mary no doubt had had her confidences with her mother,—confidences from which it had been intended by both that the father should be excluded; and now she seemed naturally to expect that this new ally should look at this great question as her mother had looked at it. The father had been regarded as a great outside power, which could hardly be overcome, but which might be evaded, or made inoperative by stratagem. It was not that the daughter did not love him. She loved him and venerated him highly,—the veneration perhaps being stronger than the love. The Duchess, too, had loved him dearly,—more dearly in late years than in

her early life. But her husband to her had always been an outside power which had in many cases to be evaded. Lady Mary, though she did not express all this, evidently thought that in this new friend she had found a woman whose wishes and aspirations for her would be those which her mother had entertained.

But Mrs. Finn was much troubled in her mind, thinking that it was her duty to tell the story to the Duke. It was not only the daughter who had trusted her, but the father also; and the father's confidence had been not only the first but by far the holier of the two. And the question was one so important to the girl's future happiness! There could be no doubt that the peril of her present position was very great.

"Mary," she said one morning, when the fortnight was nearly at an end, "your father ought to know all this. I should feel that I had betrayed him were I to go away leaving him in ignorance."

"You do not mean to say that you will tell?" said the girl, horrified at the idea of such treachery.

"I wish that I could induce you to do so. Every day that he is kept in the dark is an injury to you."

"I am doing nothing. What harm can come? It is not as though I were seeing him every day."

"This harm will come; your father of course will know that you became engaged to Mr. Tregear in Italy, and that a fact so important to him has been kept back from him."

"If there is anything in that, the evil has been done already. Of course poor mamma did mean to tell him."

"She cannot tell him now, and therefore you ought to do what she would have done."

"I cannot break my promise to him." "Him" always meant Mr. Tregear. "I have told him that I would not do so till I had his consent, and I will not."

This was very dreadful to Mrs. Finn, and yet she was most unwilling to take upon herself the part of a stern elder, and declare that under the circumstances she must tell the tale. The story had been told to her under the supposition that she was not a stern elder, that she was regarded as the special friend of the dear mother who was gone, that she might be trusted to assist against the terrible weight of parental authority. She could not endure to be regarded at once as a traitor by this young friend who had sweetly inherited the affection with which the Duchess had regarded her. And yet if she were to be silent, how could she forgive herself? "The Duke certainly ought to know at once," said she, repeating her words merely that she might gain some time for thinking, and pluck up courage to declare her purpose, should she resolve on betraying the secret.

"If you tell him now, I will never forgive you," said Lady Mary.

"I am bound in honour to see that your father knows a thing which is of such vital importance to him and to you. Having heard all this I have no right to keep it from him. If Mr. Tregear really loves you"—Lady Mary smiled at the doubt implied by this suggestion—"he ought to feel that for your sake there should be no secret from your father." Then she paused a moment to think. "Will you let me see Mr. Tregear myself, and talk to him about it?"

To this Lady Mary at first demurred, but when she found that in no other way could she prevent Mrs.

Finn from going at once to the Duke and telling him everything, she consented. Under Mrs. Finn's directions she wrote a note to her lover, which Mrs. Finn saw, and then undertook to send it, with a letter from herself, to Mr. Tregear's address in London. The note was very short, and was indeed dictated by the elder lady, with some dispute, however, as to certain terms, in which the younger lady had her way. It was as follows:

"Dearest Frank,—I wish you to see Mrs. Finn, who, as you know, was dear mamma's most particular friend. Please go to her, as she will ask you to do. When you hear what she says I think you ought to do what she advises.

"Yours forever and always,

"M. P."

This Mrs. Finn sent enclosed in an envelope, with a few words from herself, asking the gentleman to call upon her in Park Lane, on a day and at an hour fixed.

CHAPTER III.

FRANCIS OLIPHANT TREGEAR.

Mr. Francis Oliphant Tregear was a young man who might not improbably make a figure in the world, should circumstances be kind to him, but as to whom it might be doubted whether circumstances would be sufficiently kind to enable him to use serviceably his unquestionable talents and great personal gifts. He had taught himself to regard himself as a young English gentleman of the first water, qualified by his birth and position to live with all that was most noble and most elegant; and he could have lived in that sphere naturally and gracefully were it not that the part of the "sphere" which he specially affected requires wealth as well as birth and intellect. Wealth he had not, and yet he did not abandon the sphere. As a consequence of all this, it was possible that the predictions of his friends as to that figure which he was to make in the world might be disappointed.

He had been educated at Eton, from whence he had been sent to Christchurch; and both at school and at college had been the most intimate friend of the son and heir of a great and wealthy duke. He and Lord Silverbridge had been always together, and they who were interested in the career of the young nobleman had generally thought he had chosen his friend well. Tregear had gone out in honours, having been a

second-class man. His friend Silverbridge, we know, had been allowed to take no degree at all; but the terrible practical joke by which the whole front of the Dean's house had been coloured scarlet in the middle of the night had been carried on without any assistance from Tregear. The two young men had then been separated for a year; but immediately after taking his degree, Tregear, at the invitation of Lord Silverbridge, had gone to Italy, and had there completely made good his footing with the Duchess,—with what effect on another member of the Palliser family the reader already knows.

The young man was certainly clever. When the Duchess found that he could talk without any shyness, that he could speak French fluently, and that after a month in Italy he could chatter Italian, at any rate, without reticence or shame; when she perceived that all the women liked the lad's society and impudence, and that all the young men were anxious to know him, she was glad to find that Silverbridge had chosen so valuable a friend. And then he was beautiful to look at,—putting her almost in mind of another man on whom her eyes had once loved to dwell. He was dark, with hair that was almost black, but yet was not black; with clear brown eyes, a nose as regular as Apollo's, and a mouth in which was ever to be found that expression of manliness, which of all characteristics is the one which women love the best. He was five feet ten in height. He was always well dressed, and yet always so dressed as to seem to show that his outside garniture had not been matter of trouble to him. Before the Duchess had dreamed what might take place between this young man and her daughter, she had

been urgent in her congratulations to her son as to the possession of such a friend.

For though she now and then would catch a glimpse of the outer man, which would remind her of that other beautiful one whom she had known in her youth, and though, as these glimpses came, she would remember how poor in spirit and how unmanly that other one had been, though she would confess to herself how terrible had been the heart-shipwreck which that other one had brought upon herself; still she was able completely to assure herself that this man, though not superior in external grace, was altogether different in mind and character. She was old enough now to see all this and to appreciate it. Young Tregear had his own ideas about the politics of the day, and they were ideas with which she sympathised, though they were antagonistic to the politics of her life. He had his ideas about books too, as to manners of life, as to art, and even ethics. Whether or no in all this there was not much that was superficial only, she was not herself deep enough to discover. Nor would she have been deterred from admiring him had she been told that it was tinsel. Such were the acquirements, such the charms, that she loved. Here was a young man who dared to speak, and had always something ready to be spoken; who was not afraid of beauty, nor daunted by superiority of rank; who, if he had not money, could carry himself on equal terms among those who had. In this way he won the Duchess's heart, and having done that, was it odd that he should win the heart of the daughter also?

His father was a Cornwall squire of comfortable means, having joined the property of his wife to his

own for the period of his own life. She had possessed land also in Cornwall, supposed to be worth fifteen hundred a year, and his own paternal estate at Polwenning was said to be double that value. Being a prudent man, he lived at home as a country gentleman, and thus was able in his county to hold his head as high as richer men. But Frank Tregear was only his second son; and though Frank would hereafter inherit his mother's fortune, he was by no means now in a position to assume the right of living as an idle man. Yet he was idle. The elder brother, who was considerably older than Frank, was an odd man, much addicted to quarrelling with his family, and who spent his time chiefly in travelling about the world. Frank's mother, who was not the mother of the heir also, would sometimes surmise in Frank's hearing, that the entire property must ultimately come to him. That other Tregear, who was now supposed to be investigating the mountains of Crim Tartary, would surely never marry. And Frank was the favourite also with his father, who paid his debts at Oxford with not much grumbling, who was proud of his friendship with a future duke; who did not urge, as he ought to have urged, that vital question of a profession; and who, when he allowed his son four hundred pounds a year, was almost content with that son's protestations that he knew how to live as a poor man among rich men, without chagrin and without trouble.

Such was the young man who now, in lieu of a profession, had taken upon himself the responsibility of an engagement with Lady Mary Palliser. He was tolerably certain that, should he be able to overcome the parental obstacles which he would no doubt find in his

path, money would be forthcoming sufficient for the purposes of matrimonial life. The Duke's wealth was fabulous, and as a great part of it, if not the greater, had come from his wife, there would probably be ample provision for the younger children. And when the Duchess had found out how things were going, and had yielded to her daughter, after an opposition which never had the appearance even of being in earnest, she had taken upon herself to say that she would use her influence to prevent any great weight of trouble from pecuniary matters. Frank Tregear, young and bright, and full of hearty ambitions, was certainly not the man to pursue a girl simply because of her fortune; nor was he weak enough to be attracted simply by the glitter of rank; but he was wise enough with worldly wisdom to understand thoroughly the comforts of a good income, and he was sufficiently attached to high position to feel the advantage of marrying a daughter of the Duke of Omnium.

When the Duchess was leaving Italy, it had been her declared purpose to tell her husband the story as soon as they were at home in England. And it was on this understanding that Frank Tregear had explained to the girl that he would not as yet ask her father for his permission to be received into the family as a suitor. Every one concerned had felt that the Duke would not easily be reconciled to such a son-in-law, and that the Duchess should be the one to bell the cat.

There was one member of the family who had hitherto been half-hearted in the matter. Lord Silverbridge had vacillated between loyalty to his friend and a certain feeling as to the impropriety of such a match for his sister. He was aware that something very much

better should be expected for her, and still was unable to explain his objections to Tregear. He had not at first been admitted into confidence, either by his sister or by Tregear, but had questioned his friend when he saw what was going on. "Certainly I love your sister," Tregear had said; "do you object?" Lord Silverbridge was the weaker of the two, and much subject to the influence of his friend; but he could on occasion be firm, and he did at first object. But he did not object strongly, and allowed himself at last to be content with declaring that the Duke would never give his consent.

While Tregear was with his love, or near her, his hopes and fears were sufficient to occupy his mind; and immediately on his return, all the world was nothing to him, except as far as the world was concerned with Lady Mary Palliser. He had come back to England somewhat before the ducal party, and the pleasures and occupations of London life had not abated his love, but enabled him to feel that there was something in life over and beyond his love; whereas to Lady Mary, down at Matching, there had been nothing over and beyond her love,—except the infinite grief and desolation produced by her mother's death.

Tregear, when he received the note from Mrs. Finn, was staying at the Duke's house in Carlton Terrace. Silverbridge was there, and, on leaving Matching, had asked the Duke's permission to have his friend with him. The Duke at that time was not well pleased with his son as to a matter of politics, and gave his son's friend credit for the evil counsel which had produced this displeasure. But still he had not refused

his assent to this proposition. Had he done so, Silverbridge would probably have gone elsewhere; and though there was a matter in respect to Tregear of which the Duke disapproved, it was not a matter, as he thought, which would have justified him in expelling the young man from his house. The young man was a strong conservative; and now Silverbridge had declared his purpose of entering the House of Commons, if he did enter it, as one of the conservative party.

This had been a terrible blow to the Duke; and he believed that it all came from this young Tregear. Still he must do his duty, and not more than his duty. He knew nothing against Tregear. That a Tregear should be a conservative was perhaps natural enough,—at any rate, was not disgraceful; that he should have his political creed sufficiently at heart to be able to persuade another man was to his credit. He was a gentleman, well educated, superior in many things to Silverbridge himself. There were those who said that Silverbridge had redeemed himself from contempt,—from that sort of contempt which might be supposed to await a young nobleman who had painted scarlet the residence of the head of his college,—by the fact of his having chosen such a friend. The Duke was essentially a just man; and though at the very moment in which the request was made his heart was half crushed by his son's apostasy, he gave the permission asked.

"You know Mrs. Finn?" Tregear said to his friend one morning at breakfast.

"I remember her all my life. She used to be a great deal with my grandfather. I believe he left her a lot of diamonds and money, and that she would n't have them. I don't know whether the diamonds are

not locked up somewhere now, so that she can take them when she pleases."

"What a singular woman!"

"It was odd; but she had some fad about it. What makes you ask about Mrs. Finn?"

"She wants me to go and see her."

"What about?"

"I think I have heard your mother speak of her as though she loved her dearly," said Tregear.

"I don't know about loving her dearly. They were intimate, and Mrs. Finn used to be with her very much when she was in the country. She was at Matching just now, when my poor mother died. Why does she want to see you?"

"She has written to me from Matching. She wants to see me——"

"Well?"

"To tell you the truth, I do not know what she has to say to me; though I can guess."

"What do you guess?"

"It is something about your sister."

"You will have to give that up, Tregear."

"I think not."

"Yes, you will; my father will never stand it."

"I don't know what there is to stand. I am not noble, nor am I rich; but I am as good a gentleman as he is."

"My dear fellow," said the young lord, "you know very well what I think about all that. A fellow is not any better to me because he has got a title, nor yet because he owns half a county. But men have their ideas and feelings about it. My father is a rich man, and of course he 'll want his daughter to marry a rich

man. My father is noble, and he 'll want his daughter to marry a nobleman. You can't very well marry Mary without his permission, and therefore you had better let it alone."

"I have n't even asked his permission as yet."

"Even my mother was afraid to speak to him about it, and I never knew her to be afraid to say anything else to him."

"I shall not be afraid," said Tregear, looking grimly.

"I should. That 's the difference between us."

"He can't very well eat me."

"Nor even bite you;—nor will he abuse you. But he can look at you, and he can say a word or two which you will find it very hard to bear. My governor is the quietest man I know, but he has a way of making himself disagreeable when he wishes that I never saw equalled."

"At any rate, I had better go and see your Mrs. Finn." Then Tregear wrote a line to Mrs. Finn, and made his appointment.

CHAPTER IV.

PARK LANE.

From the beginning of the affair Tregear had found the necessity of bolstering himself up inwardly in his great attempt by mottoes, proverbs, and instigations to courage addressed to himself. "None but the brave deserve the fair." "De l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace." He was a man naturally of good heart in such matters, who was not afraid of his brother-men, nor yet of women, his sisters. But in this affair he knew very much persistence would be required of him, and that even with such persistence he might probably fail, unless he should find a more than ordinary constancy in the girl. That the Duke could not eat him, indeed that nobody could eat him as long as he carried himself as an honest man and a gentleman, was to him an inward assurance on which he leaned much. And yet he was conscious, almost with a feeling of shame, that in Italy he had not spoken to the Duke about his daughter because he was afraid lest the Duke might eat him. In such an affair he should have been careful from the first to keep his own hands thoroughly clean. Had it not been his duty as a gentleman to communicate with the father, if not before he gained the girl's heart, at any rate as soon as he knew he had done so? He had left Italy thinking that he would certainly meet the Duchess and her daughter in London, and that then he might go to the

Duke as though this love of his had arisen from the sweetness of those meetings in London. But all these ideas had been dissipated by the great misfortune of the death of Lady Mary's mother. From all this he was driven to acknowledge to himself that his silence in Italy had been wrong, that he had been weak in allowing himself to be guided by the counsel of the Duchess, and that he had already armed the Duke with one strong argument against him.

He did not doubt but that Mrs. Finn would be opposed to him. Of course he could not doubt but that all the world would now be opposed to him,—except the girl herself. He would find no other friend so generous, so romantic, so unworldly as the Duchess had been. It was clear to him that Lady Mary had told the story of her engagement to Mrs. Finn, and that Mrs. Finn had not as yet told it to the Duke. From this he was justified in regarding Mrs. Finn as the girl's friend. The request made was that he should at once do something which Mrs. Finn was to suggest. He could hardly have been so requested, and that in terms of such warm affection, had it been Mrs. Finn's intention to ask him to desist altogether from his courtship. This woman was regarded by Lady Mary as her mother's dearest friend. It was therefore incumbent on him now to induce her to believe in him as the Duchess had believed.

He knocked at the door of Mrs. Finn's little house in Park Lane a few minutes before the time appointed, and found himself alone when he was shown into the drawing-room. He had heard much of this lady though he had never seen her, and had heard much also of her husband. There had been a kind of mystery about

her. People did not quite understand how it was that she had been so intimate with the Duchess, nor why the late Duke had left to her an enormous legacy, which as yet had never been claimed. There was supposed, too, to have been something especially romantic in her marriage with her present husband. It was believed also that she was very rich. The rumours of all these things together had made her a person of note, and Tregear, when he found himself alone in the drawing-room, looked round about him as though a special interest was to be attached to the belongings of such a woman. It was a pretty room, somewhat dark, because the curtains were almost closed across the windows, but furnished with a pretty taste, and now, in these early April days, filled with flowers.

"I have to apologise, Mr. Tregear, for keeping you waiting," she said as she entered the room.

"I fear I was before my time."

"I know that I am after mine,—a few minutes," said the lady. He told himself that though she was not a young woman, yet she was attractive. She was dark, and still wore her black hair in curls, such as are now seldom seen with ladies. Perhaps the reduced light of the chamber had been regulated with some regard to her complexion and to her age. The effect, however, was good, and Frank Tregear felt at once interested in her.

"You have just come up from Matching?" he said.

"Yes; only the day before yesterday. It is very good of you to come to me so soon."

"Of course I came when you sent for me. I am afraid the Duke felt his loss severely."

"How should he not, such a loss as it was! Few

people knew how much he trusted her, and how dearly he loved her."

"Silverbridge has told me that he is awfully cut up."

"You have seen Lord Silverbridge then?"

"Just at present I am living with him, at Carlton Terrace."

"In the Duke's house?" she asked, with some surprise.

"Yes; in the Duke's house. Silverbridge and I have been very intimate. Of course the Duke knows that I am there. Is there any chance of his coming to town?"

"Not yet, I fear. He is determined to be alone. I wish it were otherwise, as I am sure he would better bear his sorrow, if he would go about among other men."

"No doubt he would suffer less," said Tregear. Then there was a pause. Each wished that the other should introduce the matter which both knew was to be the subject of their conversation. But Tregear would not begin. "When I left them all at Florence," he said, "I little thought that I should never see her again."

"You had been intimate with them, Mr. Tregear?"

"Yes; I think I may say I have been intimate with them. I had been at Eton and at Christchurch with Silverbridge, and we have always been much together."

"I have understood that. Have you and the Duke been good friends?"

"We have never been enemies."

"I suppose not that."

"The Duke, I think, does not much care about young people. I hardly know what he used to do with himself. When I dined with them, I saw him, but I

did not often do that. I think he used to read a good deal, and walk about alone. We were always riding."

"Lady Mary used to ride?"

"Oh yes; and Silverbridge, and Lord Gerald. And the Duchess used to drive. One of us would always be with her."

"And so you became intimate with the whole family?"

"So I became intimate with the whole family."

"And especially so with Lady Mary?" This she said in her sweetest possible tone, and with a most gracious smile.

"Especially so with Lady Mary," he replied.

"It will be very good of you, Mr. Tregear, if you endure and forgive all this cross-questioning from me, who am a perfect stranger to you."

"But you are not a perfect stranger to her."

"That is it, of course. Now, if you will allow me, I will explain to you exactly what my footing with her is. When the Duchess returned, and when I found her to be so ill as she passed through London, I went down with her into the country,—quite as a matter of course."

"So I understand."

"And there she died,—in my arms. I will not try to harass you by telling you what those few days were; how absolutely he was struck to the ground, how terrible was the grief of the daughter, how the boys were astonished by the feeling of their loss! After a few days they went away. It was, I think, their father's wish that they should go. And I too was going away, —and had felt, indeed, directly her spirit had parted from her, that I was only in the way in his house. But

I stayed at his request, because he did not wish his daughter to be alone."

"I can easily understand that, Mrs. Finn."

"I wanted her to go to Lady Cantrip, who had invited her, but she would not. In that way we were thrown together in the closest intercourse, for two or three weeks. Then she told me the story of your engagement."

"That was natural, I suppose."

"Surely so. Think of her position, left as she is without a mother! It was incumbent on her to tell some one. There was, however, one other person in whom it would have been much better that she should have confided."

"What person?"

"Her father."

"I rather fancy that it is I who ought to tell him."

"As far as I understand these things, Mr. Tregear, —which, indeed, is very imperfectly,—I think it is natural that a girl should at once tell her mother when a gentleman has made her understand that he loves her."

"She did so, Mrs. Finn."

"And I suppose that generally the mother would tell the father."

"She did not."

"No; and therefore the position of the young lady is now one of great embarrassment. The Duchess has gone from us, and we must now make up our minds as to what had better be done. It is out of the question that Lady Mary should be allowed to consider herself to be engaged, and that the father should be kept in ignorance of her position." She paused for his reply,

but as he said nothing, she continued: "Either you must tell the Duke, or she must do so, or I must do so."

"I suppose she told you in confidence."

"No doubt. She told it me presuming that I would not betray her; but I shall,—if that be a betrayal. The Duke must know it. It will be infinitely better that he should know it through you, or through her, than through me. But he must be told."

"I can't quite see why," said Tregear.

"For her sake,—whom I suppose you love."

"Certainly I love her."

"In order that she may not suffer. I wonder you do not see it, Mr. Tregear. Perhaps you have a sister."

"I have no sister, as it happens."

"But you can imagine what your feelings would be. Should you like to think of a sister as being engaged to a man without the knowledge of any of her family?"

"It was not so. The Duchess knew it. The present condition of things is altogether an accident."

"It is an accident that must be brought to an end."

"Of course it must be brought to an end. I am not such a fool as to suppose that I can make her my wife without telling her father."

"I mean at once, Mr. Tregear."

"It seems to me that you are rather dictating to me, Mrs. Finn."

"I owe you an apology, of course, for meddling in your affairs at all. But as it will be more conducive to your success that the Duke should hear this from you than from me, and as I feel that I am bound by my duty to him and to Lady Mary to see that he be not left in ignorance, I think that I am doing you a service."

"I do not like to have a constraint put upon me."

"That, Mr. Tregear, is what gentlemen, I fancy, very often feel in regard to ladies. But the constraint of which you speak is necessary for their protection. Are you unwilling to see the Duke?"

He was very unwilling, but he would not confess so much. He gave various reasons for delay, urging repeatedly that the question of his marriage was one which he could not press upon the Duke so soon after the death of the Duchess. And when she assured him that this was a matter of importance so great, that even the death of the man's wife should not be held by him to justify delay, he became angry, and for a while insisted that he must be allowed to follow his own judgment. But he gave her a promise that he would see the Duke before a week was over. Nevertheless he left the house in dudgeon, having told Mrs. Finn more than once that she was taking advantage of Lady Mary's confidence. They hardly parted as friends, and her feeling was, on the whole, hostile to him and to his love. It could not, she thought, be for the happiness of such a one as Lady Mary that she should give herself to one who seemed to have so little to recommend him.

He, when he had left her, was angry with his own weakness. He had not only promised that he would make his application to the Duke, but that he would do so within the period of a week. Who was she that she should exact terms from him after this fashion, and prescribe days and hours? And now, because this strange woman had spoken to him, he was compelled to make a journey down to the Duke's country house, and seek an interview in which he would surely be snubbed!

This occurred on a Wednesday, and he resolved that he would go down to Matching on the next Monday. He said nothing of his plan to any one, and not a word passed between him and Lord Silverbridge about Lady Mary during the first two or three days. But on the Saturday Silverbridge appeared at breakfast with a letter in his hand. "The governor is coming up to town," he said.

"Immediately?"

"In the course of next week. He says that he thinks he shall be here on Wednesday."

It immediately struck Tregear that this sudden journey must have some reference to Lady Mary and her engagement. "Do you know why he is coming?"

"Because of these vacancies in Parliament."

"Why should that bring him up?"

"I suppose he hopes to be able to talk me into obedience. He wants me to stand for the county—as a liberal, of course. I intend to stand for the borough as a conservative, and I have told them so down at Silverbridge. I am very sorry to annoy him, and all that kind of thing. But what the deuce is a fellow to do? If a man has got political convictions of his own, of course he must stick to them." This the young lord said with a good deal of self-assurance, as though he, by the light of his own reason, had ascertained on which side the truth lay in the political contests of the day.

"There is a good deal to be said on both sides of the question, my boy." At this particular moment Tregear felt that the Duke ought to be propitiated.

"You would n't have me give up my convictions!"

"A seat in Parliament is a great thing."

"I can probably secure that, whichever side I take. I thought you were so devilish hot against the radicals."

"So I am. But then you are, as it were, bound by family allegiance."

"I 'll be shot if I am. One never knows how to understand you, now-a-days. It used to be a great doctrine with you, that nothing should induce a man to vote against his political opinions."

"So it is,—if he has really got any. However, as your father is coming to London, I need not go down to Matching."

"You don't mean to say that you were going to Matching?"

"I had intended to beard the lion in his country den; but now the lion will find me in his own town den, and I must beard him here."

Then Tregear wrote a most chilling note to Mrs. Finn, informing her with great precision, that, as the Duke of Omnium intended to be in town one day next week, he would postpone the performance of his promise for a day or two beyond the allotted time.

CHAPTER V.

"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE."

Down at Matching Lady Mary's life was very dull after Mrs. Finn had left her. She had a horse to ride, but had no one to ride with her. She had a carriage in which to be driven, but no one to be driven with her, and no special places whither to go. Her father would walk daily for two hours, and she would accompany him when he encouraged her to do so; but she had an idea that he preferred taking his walks alone, and when they were together there was no feeling of confidence between them. There could be none on her part, as she knew that she was keeping back information which he was entitled to possess. On this matter she received two letters from Mrs. Finn, in the first of which she was told that Mr. Tregear intended to present himself at Matching within a few days, and was advised in the same letter not to endeavour to see her lover on that occasion; and then, in the second she was informed that this interview with her father was to be sought not at Matching but in London. From this latter letter there was of course some disappointment, though also some feeling of relief. Had he come there she might possibly have seen him after the interview. But she would have been subjected to the immediate sternness of her father's anger. That she would now escape. She would not be called on to meet him just when the first blow had fallen upon him. She was quite sure

that he would disapprove of the thing. She was quite sure that he would be very angry. She knew that he was a peculiarly just man, and yet she thought that in this he would be unjust. Had she been called upon to sing the praises of her father she would have insisted above all things on the absolute integrity of his mind, and yet, knowing as she did that he would be opposed to her marriage with Mr. Tregear, she assured herself every day and every hour that he had no right to make any such objection. The man she loved was a gentleman, and an honest man, by no means a fool, and subject to no vices. Her father had no right to demand that she should give her heart to a rich man, or to one of high rank. Rank! As for rank, she told herself that she had the most supreme contempt for it. She thought that she had seen it near enough already to be sure that it ought to have no special allurements. What was it doing for her? Simply restraining her choice among comparatively a few who seemed to her by no means the best endowed of God's creatures.

Of one thing she was very sure, that under no pressure whatsoever would she abandon her engagement with Mr. Tregear. That to her had become a bond almost as holy as matrimony itself could be. She had told the man that she loved him, and after that there could be no retreat. He had kissed her, and she had returned his caress. He had told her that she was his as his arm was round her; and she had acknowledged that it was so, that she belonged to him, and could not be taken away from him. All this was to her a compact so sacred that nothing could break it but a desire on his part to have it annulled. No other man had ever whispered a word of love to her, of no other man

had an idea entered her mind that it could be pleasant to join her lot in life with his. With her it had been all new and all sacred. Love with her had that religion which nothing but freshness can give it. That freshness, that bloom, may last through a long life. But every change impairs it, and after many changes it has perished forever. There was no question with her but that she must bear her father's anger, should he be angry; put up with his continued opposition, should he resolutely oppose her; bear all that the countesses of the world might say to her;—for it was thus that she thought of Lady Cantrip now. Any retrogression was beyond her power.

She was walking with her father when she first heard of his intended visit to London. At that time she had received Mrs. Finn's first letter, but not the second. "I suppose you 'll see Silverbridge," she said. She knew then that Frank Tregear was living with her brother.

"I am going up on purpose to see him. He is causing me much annoyance."

"Is he extravagant?"

"It is not that—at present." He winced even as he said this, for he had in truth suffered somewhat from demands made upon him for money which had hurt him not so much by their amount as by their nature. Lord Silverbridge had taken upon himself to "own a horse or two," very much to his father's chagrin, and was at this moment part proprietor of an animal supposed to stand well for the Derby. The fact was not announced in the papers with his lordship's name, but his father was aware of it, and did not like it the better because his son held the horse in partnership with a

certain Major Tifto, who was well known in the sporting world.

"What is it, papa?"

"Of course he ought to go into Parliament."

"I think he wishes it himself."

"Yes, but how? By a piece of extreme good fortune, West Barsetshire is open to him. The two seats are vacant together. There is hardly another agricultural county in England that will return a liberal, and I fear I am not asserting too much in saying that no other liberal could carry the seat but one of our family."

"You used to sit for Silverbridge, papa."

"Yes, I did. In those days the county returned four conservatives. I cannot explain it all to you, but it is his duty to contest the county on the liberal side."

"But if he is a conservative himself, papa?" asked Lady Mary, who had had some political ideas suggested to her own mind by her lover.

"It is all rubbish. It has come from that young man Tregear, with whom he has been associating."

"But, papa," said Lady Mary, who felt that even in this matter she was bound to be firm on what was now her side of the question, "I suppose it is as—as—as respectable to be a conservative as a liberal."

"I don't know that at all," said the Duke angrily.

"I thought that—the two sides were——"

She was going to express an opinion that the two parties might be supposed to stand as equal in the respect of the county, when he interrupted her. "The Pallisers have always been liberal. It will be a blow to me, indeed, if Silverbridge deserts his colours. I know that as yet he himself has had no deep thoughts on the subject, that unfortunately he does not give him

self much to thinking, and that in this matter he is being talked over by a young man whose position in life has hardly justified the great intimacy which has existed."

This was very far from being comfortable to her, but of course she said nothing in defence of Tregear's politics. Nor at present was she disposed to say anything as to his position in life, though at some future time she might not be so silent. A few days later they were again walking together, when he spoke to her about herself. "I cannot bear that you should be left here alone while I am away," he said.

"You will not be long gone, I suppose?"

"Only for three or four days now."

"I shall not mind that, papa."

"But very probably I may have to go into Barsetshire. Would you not be happier if you would let me write to Lady Cantrip, and tell her that you will go to her?"

"No, papa, I think not. There are times when one feels that one ought to be almost alone. Don't you feel that?"

"I do not wish you to feel it, nor would you do so long if you had other people around you. With me it is different. I am an old man, and cannot look for new pleasures in society. It has been the fault of my life to be too much alone. I do not want to see my children follow me in that."

"It is so very short a time as yet," said she, thinking of her mother's death.

"But I think that you should be with somebody,—with some woman who would be kind to you. I like to see you with books, but books alone should not be

sufficient at your age." How little, she thought, did he know of the state either of her heart or mind! "Do you dislike Lady Cantrip?"

"I do not know her. I can't say that I dislike a person whom I don't think I ever spoke to, and never saw above once or twice. But how can I say that I like her?" She did, however, know that Lady Cantrip was a countess all over, and would be shocked at the idea of a daughter of a Duke of Omnium marrying the younger son of a country squire. Nothing further was then said on the matter, and when the Duke went to town, Lady Mary was left quite alone; with an understanding that if he went into Barsetshire he should come back and take her with him.

He arrived at his own house in Carlton Terrace about five o'clock in the afternoon, and immediately went to his study, intending to dine and spend the evening there alone. His son had already pleaded an engagement for that afternoon, but had consented to devote the following morning to his father's wishes. Of the other sojourner in his house the Duke had thought nothing; but the other sojourner had thought very much of the Duke. Frank Tregear was fully possessed of that courage which induces a man who knows that he must be thrown over a precipice to choose the first possible moment for his fall. He had sounded Silverbridge about this change in his politics, and had found his friend quite determined not to go back to the family doctrine. Such being the case, the Duke's ill-will and hardness and general severity would probably be enhanced by his interview with his son. Tregear, therefore, thinking that nothing could be got by delay, sent his name in to the Duke before he had been an hour

in the house, and asked for an interview. The servant brought back word that his Grace was fatigued, but would see Mr. Tregear if the matter in question was one of importance. Frank's heart quailed for a moment, but only for a moment. He took up a pen and wrote a note.

"My dear Duke of Omnium,—If your Grace can spare a moment, I think you will find that what I have to say will justify the intrusion.

"Your very faithful servant,

"F. O. TREGEAR."

Of course the Duke admitted him. There was but one idea in his head as to what was coming. His son had taken this way of making some communication to him respecting his political creed. Some overture or some demand was to be preferred through Tregear. If so, it was proof of a certain anxiety as to the matter on his son's part which was not displeasing to him. But he was not left long in this mistake after Tregear had entered the room. "Sir," he said, speaking quite at once, as soon as the door was closed behind him, but still speaking very slowly, looking beautiful as Apollo as he stood upright before his wished-for father-in-law—"Sir," I have come to you to ask you to give me the hand of your daughter." The few words had been all arranged beforehand, and were now spoken without any appearance of fear or shame. No one hearing them would have imagined that an almost penniless young gentleman was asking in marriage the daughter of the richest and greatest nobleman in England.

"The hand of my daughter!" said the Duke, rising from his chair.

"I know how very great is the prize," said Frank, "and how unworthy I am of it. But—as she thinks me worthy——"

"She! What she?"

"Lady Mary."

"She think you worthy!"

"Yes, your Grace."

"I do not believe it." On hearing this, Frank simply bowed his head. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Tregear. I do not mean to say that I do not believe you. I never yet gave the lie to a gentleman, and I hope I never may be driven to do so. But there must be some mistake in this."

"I am complying with Lady Mary's wishes in asking your permission to enter your house as her suitor." The Duke stood for a moment biting his lips in silence.

"I cannot believe it," he said at last. "I cannot bring myself to believe it. There must be some mistake. My daughter! Lady Mary Palliser!" Again the young man bowed his head. "What are your pretensions?"

"Simply her regard."

"Of course it is impossible. You are not so ignorant but that you must have known as much when you came to me."

There was so much scorn in his words, and in the tone in which they were uttered, that Tregear in his turn was becoming angry. He had prepared himself to bow humbly before the great man, before the Duke, before the Crœsus, before the late Prime Minister, before the man who was to be regarded as certainly one

of the most exalted of the earth; but he had not prepared himself to be looked at as the Duke looked at him. "The truth, my Lord Duke, is this," he said, "that your daughter loves me, and that we are engaged to each other,—as far as that engagement can be made without your sanction as her father."

"It cannot have been made at all," said the Duke.

"I can only hope,—we can both of us only hope that a little time may soften——"

"It is out of the question. There must be an end of this altogether. You must neither see her, nor hear from her, nor in any way communicate with her. It is altogether impossible. I believe, sir, that you have no means?"

"Very little at present, Duke."

"How did you think you were to live? But it is altogether unnecessary to speak of such a matter as that. There are so many reasons to make this impossible, that it would be useless to discuss one as being more important than others. Has any other one of my family known of this?" This he added, wishing to ascertain whether Lord Silverbridge had disgraced himself by lending his hand to such a disposition of his sister.

"Oh yes," said Tregear.

"Who has known it?"

"The Duchess, sir. We had all her sympathy and approval."

"I do not believe a word of it," said the Duke, becoming extremely red in the face. He was forced to do now that which he had just declared that he had never done in his life,—driven by the desire of his heart to acquit the wife he had lost of the terrible impru-

dence, worse than imprudence, of which she was now accused.

"That is the second time, my lord, that you have found it necessary to tell me that you have not believed direct assertions which I made you. But, luckily for me, the two assertions are capable of the earliest and most direct proof. You will believe Lady Mary, and she will confirm me in the one and the other."

The Duke was almost beside himself with emotion and grief. He did know,—though now at this moment he was most loth to own to himself that it was so,—that his dear wife had been the most imprudent of women. And he recognised in her encouragement of this most pernicious courtship,—if she had encouraged it,—a repetition of that romantic folly by which she had so nearly brought herself to shipwreck in her own early life. If it had been so,—even whether it had been so or not,—he had been wrong to tell the man that he did not believe him. And the man had rebuked him with dignity. "At any rate it is impossible," he repeated.

"I cannot allow that it is impossible."

"That is for me to judge, sir."

"I trust that you will excuse me when I say that I also must hold myself to be in some degree a judge in the matter. If you were in my place, you would feel——"

"I could not possibly be in your place."

"If your Grace were in my place you would feel that as long as you were assured by the young lady that your affection was valued by her you would not be deterred by the opposition of her father. That you

should yield to me, of course I do not expect; that Lady Mary should be persistent in her present feelings, when she knows your mind, perhaps I have no right to hope; but should she be so persistent as to make you feel that her happiness depends, as mine does, on our marriage, then I shall believe that you will yield at last."

"Never!" said the Duke. "Never! I shall never believe that my daughter's happiness can be assured by a step which I should regard as disgraceful to her."

"Disgraceful is a violent word, my lord."

"It is the only word that will express my meaning."

"And one which I must be bold enough to say you are not justified in using. Should she become my wife to-morrow, no one in England would think she had disgraced herself. The Queen would receive her on her marriage. All your friends would hold out their hands to us,—presuming that we had your good-will."

"But you would not have it."

"Her disgrace would not depend upon that, my lord. Should your daughter so dispose of herself as to disgrace herself,—which I think to be impossible,—your countenance could not set her right. Nor can the withdrawal of your countenance condemn her before the world if she does that with herself which any other lady might do and remain a lady."

The Duke, when he heard this, even in the midst of his wrath, which was very violent, and in the midst of his anger, which was very acute, felt that he had to deal with a man,—with one whom he could not put off from him into the gutter, and there leave as buried in the mud. And there came, too, a feeling upon him, which he had no time to analyse, but of which he was part aware, that this terrible indiscretion on the part of

his daughter and of his late wife was less wonderful than it had at first appeared to be. But not on that account was he the less determined to make the young man feel that his parental opposition would be invincible. "It is quite impossible, sir. I do not think that I need say anything more." Then, while Tregear was meditating whether to make any reply, the Duke asked a question which had better have been left unasked. The asking of it diminished somewhat from that ducal, grand-ducal, quasi-archducal, almost godlike superiority which he had assumed, and showed the curiosity of a mere man. "Has anybody else been aware of this?" he said, still wishing to know whether he had cause for anger against Silverbridge in the matter.

"Mrs. Finn is aware of it," answered Tregear.

"Mrs. Finn!" exclaimed the Duke, as though he had been stung by an adder. This was the woman whom he had prayed to remain awhile with his daughter after his wife had been laid in her grave, in order that there might be some one near whom he could trust! And this very woman whom he had so trusted,—whom, in his early associations with her, he had disliked and distrusted but had taught himself both to like and to trust because his wife had loved her,—this woman was the she-Pandarus who had managed matters between Tregear and his daughter! His wife had been too much subject to her influence. That he had always known. And now, in this last act of her life, she had allowed herself to be persuaded to give up her daughter by the baneful wiles of this most pernicious woman. Such were the workings of the Duke's mind when the young man told him that Mrs. Finn was acquainted with the

whole affair. As the reader is aware, nothing could have been more unjust.

"I mentioned her name," said Tregear, "because I thought she had been a friend of the family."

"That will do, sir. I have been greatly pained as well as surprised by what I have heard. Of the real state of the case I can form no opinion till I see my daughter. You, of course, will hold no further intercourse with her." He paused as though for a promise, but Tregear did not feel himself called upon to say a word in one direction or in the other. "It will be my care that you shall not do so. Good morning, sir."

Tregear, who during the interview had been standing, then bowed, turned upon his heel, and left the room.

The Duke seated himself, and, crossing his arms upon his chest, sat for an hour looking up at the ceiling. Why was it that, for him, such a world of misery had been prepared? What wrong had he done, of what imprudence had he been guilty, that, at every turn of life, something should occur so grievous as to make him think himself the most wretched of men? No man had ever loved his wife more dearly than he had done; and yet now, in that very excess of tenderness which her death had occasioned, he was driven to accuse her of a great sin against himself, in that she had kept from him her knowledge of this affair;—for, when he came to turn the matter over in his mind, he did believe Tregear's statement as to her encouragement. Then, too, he had been proud of his daughter. He was a man so reticent and undemonstrative in his manner that he had never known how to make confidential friends of his children. In his sons hith-

erto he had not taken pride. They were gallant, well-grown, handsome boys, with a certain dash of cleverness,—more like their mother than their father; but they had not as yet done anything as he would have had them do it. But the girl, in the perfection of her beauty, in the quiescence of her manner, in the nature of her studies, and in the general dignity of her bearing, had seemed to be all that he had desired. And now she had engaged herself, behind his back, to the younger son of a little county squire!

But his anger against Mrs. Finn was hotter than his anger against any one in his own family.

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CHAPTER VI.

MAJOR TIFTO.

Major Tifto had lately become a member of the Beargarden Club, under the auspices of his friend Lord Silverbridge. It was believed, by those who had made some inquiry into the matter, that the Major had really served a campaign as a volunteer in the Carlist army in the north of Spain. When, therefore, it was declared by some one that he was not a major at all, his friends were able to contradict the assertion, and to impute it to slander. Instances were brought up,—declared by these friends to be innumerable, but which did, in truth, amount to three or four,—of English gentlemen who had come home from a former Carlist war, bearing the title of colonel, without any contradiction or invidious remark. Had this gallant officer appeared as Colonel Tifto, perhaps less might have been said about it. There was a little lack of courage in the title which he did choose. But it was accepted at last, and, as Major Tifto, he was proposed, seconded, and elected at the Beargarden.

But he had other points in his favour besides the friendship of Lord Silverbridge,—points which had probably led to that friendship. He was, without doubt, one of the best horsemen in England. There were some who said that, across country, he was the very best, and that, as a judge of a hunter, few excelled

him. Of late years he had crept into credit as a betting man. No one supposed that he had much capital to work with; but still, when he lost a bet, he paid it.

Soon after his return from Spain, he was chosen as master of the Runnymede Fox-Hounds, and was thus enabled to write the letters M.F.H. after his name. The gentlemen who rode with the Runnymede were not very liberal in their terms, and had lately been compelled to change their master rather more frequently than was good for that quasi-suburban hunt; but now they had fitted themselves well. How he was to hunt the country five days a fortnight, finding servants and horses, and feeding the hounds, for eight hundred pounds a year, no one could understand. But Major Tifto not only undertook to do it, but did it. And he actually succeeded in obtaining for the Runnymede a degree of popularity which for many years previous it had not possessed. Such a man,—even though no one did know anything of his father or mother, though no one had ever heard him speak of a brother or a sister, though it was believed that he had no real income,—was felt by many to be the very man for the Beargarden; and when his name was brought up at the committee, Lord Silverbridge was able to say so much in his favour that only two blackballs were given against him. Under the mild rule of the club, three would have been necessary to exclude him; and therefore Major Tifto was now as good a member as any one else.

He was a well-made little man, good-looking for those who like such good looks. He was light-haired and blue-eyed, with regular and yet not inexpressive features. But his eyes were small and never tranquil, and rarely capable of looking at the person who was

speaking to him. He had small, well-trimmed, glossy whiskers, with the best-kept moustache, and the best-kept tuft on his chin which were to be seen anywhere. His face still bore the freshness of youth, which was a marvel to many, who declared that, from facts within their knowledge, Tifto must be far on the wrong side of forty. At a first glance you would hardly have called him thirty. No doubt, when, on close inspection, you came to look into his eyes, you could see the hand of time. Even if you believed the common assertion that he painted,—which it was very hard to believe of a man who passed the most of his time in the hunting-field or on a race-course,—yet the paint on his cheeks would not enable him to move with the elasticity which seemed to belong to all his limbs. He rode flat races and steeple chases,—if jump races may still be so called; and with his own hounds and with the Queen's did incredible things on horseback. He could jump over chairs too,—the backs of four chairs in a dining-room after dinner,—a feat which no gentleman of forty-five could perform, even though he painted himself ever so.

So much in praise of Major Tifto honesty has compelled the present chronicler to say. But there were traits of character in which he fell off a little, even in the estimation of those whose pursuits endeared him to them. He could not refrain from boasting,—and especially from boasting about women. His desire for glory in that direction knew no bounds, and he would sometimes mention names, and bring himself into trouble. It was told of him that at one period of his life, when misfortune had almost overcome him, when sorrow had produced prostration, and prostration some

expression of truth, he had owned to a friend his own conviction that could he have kept his tongue from talking of women, he might have risen to prosperity in his profession. From these misfortunes he had emerged, and, no doubt, had often reflected on what he himself had then said. But we know that the drunkard, though he hates drunkenness, cannot but drink,—that the gambler cannot keep from the dice. Major Tifto still lied about women, and could not keep his tongue from the subject. He would boast, too, about other matters, —much to his own disadvantage. He was, too, very "deep," and some men, who could put up with his other failings, could not endure that. Whatever he wanted to do he would attempt round three corners. Though he could ride straight, he could do nothing else straight. He was full of mysteries. If he wanted to draw Charter Wood he would take his hounds out of the street at Egham directly in the other direction. If he had made up his mind to ride Lord Pottlepot's horse for the great Leamington handicap, he would be sure to tell even his intimate friends that he was almost determined to take the "baronet's" offer of a mount. This he would do even when there was no possible turn in the betting to be affected by such falsehood. So that his companions were apt to complain that there was no knowing where to have Tifto. And then, they who were old enough in the world to have had some experience in men, had perceived that peculiar quality of his eyes which never allowed them to look any one in the face.

That Major Tifto should make money by selling horses was, perhaps, a necessity of his position. No one grumbled at him because he did so, or thought

that such a pursuit was incompatible with his character as a sporting gentleman. But there were some who considered that they had suffered unduly under his hands, and in their bargains with him had been made to pay more than a proper amount of tax for the advantages of his general assistance. When a man has perhaps made fifty pounds by using a "straight tip" as to a horse at Newmarket, in doing which he had of course encountered some risks, he feels he ought not be made to pay the amount back into the pockets of the "tipper," and at the same time to find himself saddled with the possession of a perfectly useless animal. In this way there were rocks in the course through which Tifto was called on to steer his bark. Of course he was anxious, when preying upon his acquaintances, to spare those who were useful friends to him. Now and again he would sell a serviceable animal at a fair price, and would endeavour to make such sale in favour of some one whose countenance would be a rock to him. He knew his business well, but yet there would be mistakes.

Now, at this very moment, was the culmination of the Major's life. He was master of the Runnymede Hounds, he was partner with the eldest son of a Duke in the possession of that magnificent colt, the Prime Minister, and he was a member of the Beargarden. He was a man who had often been despondent about himself, but was now disposed to be a little triumphant. He had finished his season well with the Runnymede, and were it not that, let him work as he would, his expenses always exceeded his means, he would have been fairly comfortable.

At eight o'clock Lord Silverbridge and his friend

met in the dining-room of the Beargarden. "Have you been here before?" asked the lord.

"Not in here, my lord. I just looked in at the smoking-room last night. Glasslough and Nidderdale were there. I thought we should have got up a rubber, but they did n't seem to see it."

"There is whist here generally. You 'll find out all about it before long. Perhaps they are a little afraid of you."

"I 'm the worst hand at cards, I suppose, in England. A dash at loo for about an hour, and half-a-dozen cuts at blind hookey,—that 's about my form. I know I drop more than I pick up. If I knew what I was about I should never touch a card."

"Horses; eh, Tifto?"

"Horses, yes. They 've pretty good claret here, eh, Silverbridge?" He could never hit off his familiarity quite right. He had my-lorded his young friend at first, and now brought out the name with a hesitating twang, which the young nobleman appreciated. But then the young nobleman was quite aware that the Major was a friend for club purposes, and sporting purposes, and not for home use.

"Everything of that kind is pretty good here," said the lord.

"You were saying—horses."

"I dare say you do better with them than with cards."

"If I did n't I don't know where I should be, seeing what a lot pass through my hands in the year. Any one of our fellows who has a horse to sell thinks that I am bound to buy him. And I do buy 'em. Last May I had forty-two hunters on my hands."

"How many of them have you got now?"

"Three. Three of that lot,—though a goodish many have come up since. But what does it amount to? When I have anything that is very good, some fellow that I like gets him from me."

"After paying for him."

"After paying for him! Yes; I don't mean that I make a fellow a present. But the man who buys has a deal the best of it. Did you ever get anything better than that spotted chestnut in your life?"

"What, old Sarcinet?"

"You had her for one hundred and sixty pounds. Now, if you were on your oath, what is she worth?"

"She suits me, Major, and of course I should n't sell her."

"I rather think not. I knew what that mare was well enough. A dealer would have had three hundred and fifty pounds for her. I could have got the money easily if I had taken her down into the shires, and ridden her a day or two myself."

"I gave you what you asked."

"Yes, you did. It is n't often that I take less than I ask. But the fact is, about horses, I don't know whether I should n't do better if I never owned an animal at all but those I want for my own use. When I am dealing with a man I call a friend, I can't bear to make money of him. I don't think fellows give me all the credit they should do for sticking to them." The Major, as he said this, leaned back in his chair, put his hand up to his moustache, and looked sadly away into the vacancy of the room, as though he were meditating sorrowfully on the ingratitude of the world.

"I suppose it 's all right about Cream Cheese?" asked the lord.

"Well, it ought to be." And now the Major spoke like an oracle, leaning forward on the table, uttering his words in a low voice, but very plainly, so that not a syllable might be lost. "When you remember how he ran at the Craven with 9 st. 12 lb. on him, that it took Archbishop all he knew to beat him with only 9 st. 2 lb., and what the lot at Chester are likely to be, I don't think that there can be seven to one against him. I should be very glad to take it off your hands, only the figures are a little too heavy for me."

"I suppose Sunflower 'll be the best animal there?"

"Not a doubt of it, if he 's all right, and if his temper will stand. Think what a course Chester is for an ill-conditioned brute like that! And then he 's the most uncertain horse in training. There are times he won't feed. From what I hear, I should n't wonder if he don't turn up at all."

"Solomon says he 's all right."

"You won't get Solomon to take four to one against him, nor yet four and a half. I suppose you 'll go down, my lord?"

"Well, yes; if there 's nothing else doing just then. I don't know how it may be about this electioneering business. I shall go and smoke upstairs."

At the Beargarden there were—I was going to say, two smoking-rooms; but in truth the house was a smoking-room all over. It was, however, the custom of those who habitually played cards to have their cigars and coffee upstairs. Into this sanctum Major Tifto had not yet been introduced, but now he was taken there under Lord Silverbridge's wing. There were already four or five assembled, among whom was Mr. Adolphus Longstaff, a young man of about thirty-

five years of age who spent very much of his time at the Beargarden. "Do you know my friend, Tifto?" said the lord. "Tifto, this is Mr. Longstaff, whom men within the walls of this asylum sometimes call Dolly." Whereupon the Major bowed and smiled graciously.

"I have heard of Major Tifto," said Dolly.

"Who has not?" said Lord Nidderdale, another middle-aged young man, who made one of the company. Again the Major bowed.

"Last season I was always intending to get down to your country and have a day with the Tiftoes," said Dolly. "Don't they call your hounds the Tiftoes?"

"They shall be called so if you like," said the Major. "And why did n't you come?"

"It always was such a grind."

"Train down from Paddington every day at 10.30."

"That 's all very well if you happen to be up. Well, Silverbridge, how 's the Prime Minister?"

"How is he, Tifto?" asked the noble partner.

"I don't think there 's a man in England just at present enjoying a very much better state of health," said the Major pleasantly.

"Safe to run?" asked Dolly.

"Safe to run! Why should n't he be safe to run?"

"I mean sure to start."

"I think we mean him to start, don't we, Silverbridge?" said the Major.

There was something perhaps in the tone in which the last remark was made which jarred a little against the young lord's dignity. At any rate he got up and declared his purpose of going to the opera. He should

look in, he said, and hear a song from Mdlle. Stuffa. Mdlle. Stuffa was the nightingale of the season, and Lord Silverbridge, when he had nothing else to do, would sometimes think that he was fond of music. Soon after he was gone Major Tifto had some whiskey and water, lit his third cigar, and began to feel the glory of belonging to the Beargarden. With Lord Silverbridge, to whom it was essentially necessary that he should make himself agreeable at all times, he was somewhat overweighted as it were. Though he attempted an easy familiarity, he was a little afraid of Lord Silverbridge. With Dolly Longstaff he felt that he might be comfortable,—not, perhaps, understanding that gentleman's character. With Lord Nidderdale he had previously been acquainted, and had found him to be good-natured. So, as he sipped his whiskey, he became confidential and comfortable.

"I never thought so very much about her good looks," he said. They were talking of the singer, the charms of whose voice had carried Lord Silverbridge away.

"Did you ever see her off the stage?" asked Nidderdale.

"Oh dear, yes."

"She does not go about very much, I fancy," said some one.

"I dare say not," said Tifto. "But she and I have had a day or two together, for all that."

"You must have been very much favoured," said Dolly.

"We 've been pals ever since she has been over here," said Tifto, with an enormous lie.

"How do you get on with her husband?" asked

Dolly,—in the simplest voice, as though not in the least surprised at his companion's statement.

"Husband!" exclaimed the Major, who was not possessed of sufficient presence of mind to suppress all signs of his ignorance.

"Ah," said Dolly; "you are not probably aware that your pal has been married to Mr. Thomas Jones for the last year and a half." Soon after that Major Tifto left the club,—with considerably enhanced respect for Mr. Longstaff.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSERVATIVE CONVICTIONS.

Lord Silverbridge had engaged himself to be with his father the next morning at half-past nine, and he entered the breakfast-room a very few minutes after that hour. He had made up his mind as to what he would say to his father. He meant to call himself a conservative, and to go into the House of Commons under that denomination. All the men among whom he lived were conservatives. It was a matter on which, as he thought, his father could have no right to control him. Down in Barsetshire, as well as up in London, there was some little difference of opinion in this matter. The people of Silverbridge declared that they would prefer to have a conservative member, as indeed they had had one for the last session. They had loyally returned the Duke himself while he was a commoner, but they had returned him as being part and parcel of the Omnium appendages. That was all over now. As a constituency they were not endowed with advanced views, and thought that a conservative would suit them best. That being so, and as they had been told that the Duke's son was a conservative, they fancied that by electing him they would be pleasing everybody. But, in truth, by so doing they would by no means please the Duke. He had told them on previous occasions that they might elect whom they pleased, and felt no anger because they had elected a conservative.

They might send up to Parliament the most antediluvian old tory they could find in England if they wished, only not his son, not a Palliser as a tory or conservative. And then, though the little town had gone back in the ways of the world, the county, or the Duke's division of the county, had made so much progress, that a liberal candidate recommended by him would almost certainly be returned. It was just the occasion on which a Palliser should show himself ready to serve his country. There would be an expense, but he would think nothing of expense in such a matter. Ten thousand pounds spent on such an object would not vex him. The very contest would have given him new life. All this Lord Silverbridge understood, but had said to himself and to all his friends that it was a matter in which he did not intend to be controlled.

The Duke had passed a very unhappy night. He had told himself that any such marriage as that spoken of was out of the question. He believed that the matter might be so represented to his girl as to make her feel that it was out of the question. He hardly doubted but that he could stamp it out. Though he should have to take her away into some further corner of the world, he would stamp it uot. But she, when this foolish passion of hers should have been thus stamped out, could never be the pure, the bright, the unsullied, unsoiled thing of the possession of which he had thought so much. He had never spoken of his hopes about her even to his wife, but in the silence of his very silent life he had thought much of the day when he would give her to some noble youth,—noble with all gifts of nobility, including rank and wealth,—who might be fit to receive her. Now, even though no one

else should know it,—and all would know it,—she would be the girl who had condescended to love young Tregear.

His own Duchess, she whose loss to him now was as though he had lost half his limbs,—had not she in the same way loved a Tregear, or worse than a Tregear, in her early days? Ah, yes! And though his Cora had been so much to him, had he not often felt, had he not been feeling all his days, that Fate had robbed him of the sweetest joy that is given to man, in that she had not come to him loving him with her early spring of love, as she had loved that poor ne'er-do-well? How infinite had been his regrets! How often had he told himself that with all that Fortune had given him still Fortune had been unjust to him because he had been robbed of that. Not to save his life could he have whispered a word of this to any one, but he had felt it. He had felt it for years. Dear as she had been, she had not been quite what she would have been but for that. And now this girl of his, who was so much dearer to him than anything else left to him, was doing exactly as her mother had done. The young man might be stamped out. He might be made to vanish as that other young man had vanished. But the fact that he had been there, cherished in the girl's heart,—that could not be stamped out.

He struggled gallantly to acquit the memory of his wife. He could best do that by leaning with the full weight of his mind on the presumed integrity of Mrs. Finn. Had he not known from the first that the woman was an adventuress? And had he not declared to himself over and over again that between such a one and himself there should be no intercourse, no common

feeling? He had allowed himself to be talked into an intimacy, to be talked almost into an affection. And this was the result!

And how should he treat this matter in his coming interview with his son;—or should he make an allusion to it? At first it seemed as though it would be impossible for him to give his mind to that other subject. How could he enforce the merits of political liberalism, and the duty of adhering to the old family party, while his mind was entirely preoccupied with his daughter? It had suddenly become almost indifferent to him whether Silverbridge should be a conservative or a liberal. But as he dressed he told himself that, as a man, he ought to be able to do a plain duty, marked out for him as this had been by his own judgment, without regard to personal suffering. The hedger and ditcher must make his hedge and clean his ditch even though he be tormented by rheumatism. His duty by his son he must do, even though his heart were torn in pieces.

During breakfast he tried to be gracious and condescended to ask his son a question about the Prime Minister. Racing was an amusement to which English noblemen had been addicted for many ages, and had been held to be serviceable rather than disgraceful if conducted in a noble fashion. He did not credit Tifto with much nobility. He knew but little about the Major. He would much have preferred that his son should have owned a horse alone, if he must have anything to do with ownership. "Would it not be better to buy the other share?" asked the Duke.

"It would take a deal of money, sir. The Major would ask a couple of thousand, I should think."

"That is a great deal."

"And then the Major is a very useful man. He thoroughly understands the turf."

"I hope he does n't live by it?"

"Oh no; he does n't live by it. That is, he has a great many irons in the fire."

"I do not mind a young man owning a horse, if he can afford the expense,—as you perhaps can do; but I hope you don't bet."

"Nothing to speak of."

"Nothing to speak of is so apt to grow into that which has to be spoken of." So much the father said at breakfast, hardly giving his mind to the matter discussed,—his mind being on other things. But when their breakfast was eaten, then it was necessary that he should begin. "Silverbridge," he said, "I hope you have thought better of what we were talking as to these coming elections."

"Well, sir;—of course I have thought about it."

"And you can do as I would have you?"

"You see, sir, a man's political opinion is a kind of thing he can't get rid of."

"You can hardly as yet have any very confirmed political opinion. You are still young, and I do not suppose that you have thought much about politics."

"Well, sir, I think I have. I 've got my own ideas. We 've got to protect our position as well as we can against the radicals and communists."

"I cannot admit that at all, Silverbridge. There is no great political party in this country anxious either for communism or for revolution. But, putting all that aside for the present, do you think that a man's political opinions should be held in regard to his own in-

dividual interests, or to the much wider interests of others, whom we call the public?"

"To his own interest," said the young man with decision.

"It is simply self-protection then?"

"His own and his class. The people will look after themselves, and we must look after ourselves. We are so few and they are so many, that we shall have quite enough to do."

Then the Duke gave his son a somewhat lengthy political lecture, which was intended to teach him that the greatest benefit of the greatest number was the object to which all political studies should tend. The son listened to it with attention, and when it was over, expressed his opinion that there was a great deal in what his father had said. "I trust, if you will consider it," said the Duke, "that you will not find yourself obliged to desert the school of politics in which your father has not been an inactive supporter, and to which your family has belonged for many generations."

"I could not call myself a liberal," said the young politician.

"Why not?"

"Because I am a conservative."

"And you won't stand for the county on the liberal interest?"

"I should be obliged to tell them that I should always give a conservative vote."

"Then you refuse to do what I ask?"

"I do not know how I can help refusing. If you wanted me to grow a couple of inches taller I could n't do it, even though I should be ever so anxious to oblige you."

"But a very young man, as you are, may have so much deference for his elders as to be induced to believe that he has been in error."

"Oh yes; of course."

"You cannot but be aware that the political condition of the country is the one subject to which I have devoted the labour of my life."

"I know that very well; and, of course, I know how much they all think of you."

"Then my opinion might go for something with you?"

"So it does, sir; I should n't have doubted at all only for that little. Still, you see, as the thing is,—how am I to help myself?"

"You believe that you must be right,—you, who have never given an hour's study to the subject!"

"No, sir. In comparison with a great many men, I know that I am a fool. Perhaps it is because I know that, that I am a conservative. The radicals are always saying that a conservative must be a fool. Then a fool ought to be a conservative."

Hereupon the father got up from his chair and turned round, facing the fire, with his back to his son. He was becoming very angry, but endeavoured to restrain his anger. The matter in dispute between them was of so great importance, that he could hardly be justified in abandoning it in consequence of arguments so trifling in themselves as these which his son adduced. As he stood there for some minutes thinking of it all, he was tempted again and again to burst out in wrath and threaten the lad,—to threaten him as to money, as to his amusements, as to the general tenor of his life. The pity was so great that the lad should be so stub-

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born and so foolish! He would never ask his son to be a slave to the liberal party, as he had been. But that a Palliser should not be a liberal,—and his son as the first recreant Palliser,—was wormwood to him! As he stood there he more than once clenched his fist in eager desire to turn upon the young man; but he restrained himself, telling himself that in justice he should not be angry for such offence as this. To become a conservative, when the path to liberalism was so fairly open, might be the part of a fool, but could not fairly be imputed as a crime. To endeavour to be just was the study of his life, and in no condition of life can justice be more imperatively due than from a father to his son!

"You mean to stand for Silverbridge?" he said at last.

"Not if you object, sir."

This made it worse. It became now still more difficult for him to scold the young man. "You are aware that I should not meddle in any way."

"That was what I supposed. They will return a conservative, at any rate."

"It is not that I care about," said the Duke sadly.

"Upon my word, sir, I am very sorry to vex you; but what would you have me do? I will give up Parliament altogether, if you say that you wish it."

"No; I do not wish that."

"You would n't have me tell a lie?"

"No."

"What can I do, then?"

"Learn what there is to learn from some master fit to teach you."

"There are so many masters."

"I believe it to be that most arrogant, ill-behaved young man who was with me yesterday who has done this evil."

"You mean Frank Tregear?"

"I do mean Mr. Tregear."

"He 's a conservative, of course; and of course he and I have been much together. Was he with you yesterday, sir?"

"Yes, he was."

"What was that about?" asked Lord Silverbridge, in a voice that almost betrayed fear, for he knew very well what cause had produced the interview.

"He has been speaking to me——" When the Duke had got so far as this he paused, finding himself to be hardly able to declare the disgrace which had fallen upon himself and his family. As he did tell the story, both his face and his voice were altered, so that the son, in truth, was scared. "He has been speaking to me about your sister. Did you know of this?"

"I knew there was something between them."

"And you encouraged it?"

"No, sir; just the contrary. I have told him that I was quite sure it would never do."

"And why did you not tell me?"

"Well, sir; that was hardly my business, was it?"

"Not to guard the honour of your sister?"

"You see, sir, how many things have happened all at once."

"What things?"

"My dear mother, sir, thought well of him." The Duke uttered a deep sigh, and turned again round to the fire. "I always told him that you would never consent."

"I should think not."

"It has come so suddenly. I should have spoken to you about it as soon as—as soon as——" He had meant to say as soon as the husband's grief for the loss of his wife had been in some degree appeased, but he could not speak the words. The Duke, however, perfectly understood him. "In the meantime, they were not seeing each other."

"Nor writing?"

"I think not."

"Mrs. Finn has known it all."

"Mrs. Finn!"

"Certainly. She has known it all through."

"I do not see how it can have been so."

"He told me so himself," said the Duke, unwittingly putting words into Tregear's mouth which Tregear had never uttered. "There must be an end of this. I will speak to your sister. In the meantime, the less, I think, you see of Mr. Tregear the better. Of course it is out of the question he should be allowed to remain in this house. You will make him understand that at once, if you please."

"Oh, certainly," said Silverbridge.

CHAPTER VIII.

"HE IS A GENTLEMAN."

THE Duke returned to Matching an almost broken-hearted man. He had intended to go down into Barsetshire, in reference to the coming elections;—not with the view of interfering in any unlordly, or rather unpeerlike fashion, but thinking that if his eldest son were to stand for the county in a proper constitutional spirit, as the eldest son of so great a county magnate ought to do, his presence at Gatherum Castle, among his own people, might probably be serviceable, and would certainly be gracious. There would be no question of entertainment. His bereavement would make that impossible. But there would come from his presence a certain savour of proprietorship, and a sense of power which would be beneficial to his son, and would not, as the Duke thought, be contrary to the spirit of the constitution. But all this was now at an end. He told himself that he did not care how the elections might go;—that he did not care much how anything might go. Silverbridge might stand for Silverbridge if he so pleased. He would give neither assistance nor obstruction, either in the county or in the borough. He wrote to this effect to his agent, Mr. Moreton;—but at the same time desired that gentleman to pay Lord Silverbridge's electioneering expenses, feeling it to be his duty as a father to do so much for his son.

But though he endeavoured to engage his thoughts in these parliamentary matters, though he tried to make himself believe that this political apostasy was the trouble which vexed him, in truth that other misery was so crushing, as to make the affairs of his son insignificant. How should he express himself to her? That was the thought present to his mind as he went down to Matching. Should he content himself with simply telling her that such a wish on her part was disgraceful, and that it could never be fulfilled; or should he argue the matter with her, endeavouring as he did so to persuade her gently that she was wrong to place her affections so low, and so to obtain from her an assurance that the idea should be abandoned?

The latter course would be infinitely the better,—if only he could accomplish it. But he was conscious of his own hardness of manner, and was aware that he had never succeeded in establishing confidence between himself and his daughter. It was a thing for which he had longed,—as a plain girl might long to possess the charms of an acknowledged beauty;—as a poor little fellow, five feet in height, might long to have a cubit added to his stature.

Though he was angry with her, how willingly would he take her into his arms and assure her of his forgiveness! How anxious he would be to make her understand that nothing should be spared by him to add beauty and grace to her life! Only, as a matter of course, Mr. Tregear must be abandoned. But he knew of himself that he would not know how to begin to be tender and forgiving. He knew that he would not know how not to be stern and hard.

But he must find out the history of it all. No doubt

the man had been his son's friend, and had joined his party in Italy at his son's instance. But yet he had come to entertain an idea that Mrs. Finn had been the great promoter of the sin, and he thought that Tregear had told him that that lady had been concerned with the matter from the beginning. In all this there was a craving in his heart to lessen the amount of culpable responsibility which might seem to attach itself to the wife he had lost.

He reached Matching about eight, and ordered his dinner to be brought to him in his own study. When Lady Mary came to welcome him, he kissed her forehead and bade her come to him after his dinner. "Shall I not sit with you, papa, whilst you are eating it?" she asked; but he merely told her that he would not trouble her to do that. Even in saying this he was so unusually tender to her that she assured herself that her lover had not as yet told his tale.

The Duke's meals were not generally feasts for a Lucullus. No man living, perhaps, cared less what he ate or knew less what he drank. In such matters he took what was provided for him, making his dinner off the first bit of meat that was brought, and simply ignoring anything offered to him afterwards. And he would drink what wine the servant gave him, mixing it, whatever it might be, with seltzer water. He had never been much given to the pleasures of the table; but this habit of simplicity had grown on him of late, till the Duchess used to tell him that his wants were so few, that it was a pity he was not a hermit, vowed to poverty.

Very shortly a message was brought to Lady Mary, saying that her father wished to see her. She went at

once, and found him seated on a sofa, which stood close along the bookshelves on one side of the room. The table had already been cleared, and he was alone. He not only was alone, but had not even a pamphlet or newspaper in his hand.

Then she knew that Tregear must have told the story. As this occurred to her, her legs almost gave way under her. "Come and sit down, Mary," he said, pointing to the seat on the sofa beside himself.

She sat down and took one of his hands within her own. Then, as he did not begin at once, she asked a question. "Will Silverbridge stand for the county, papa?"

"No, my dear."

"But for the town?"

"Yes, my dear."

"And he won't be a liberal?"

"I am afraid not. It is a cause of great unhappiness to me; but I do not know that I should be justified in any absolute opposition. A man is entitled to his own opinion, even though he be a very young man."

"I am so sorry that it should be so, papa, because it vexes you."

"I have many things to vex me;—things to break my heart."

"Poor mamma!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; that above all others. But life and death are in God's hands, and even though we may complain we can alter nothing. But whatever our sorrows are while we are here, we must do our duty."

"I suppose he may be a good member of Parliament, though he has turned conservative?"

"I am not thinking about your brother. I am think-

ing about you." The poor girl gave a little start on the sofa. "Do you know—Mr. Tregear?" he added.

"Yes, papa; of course I know him. You used to see him in Italy."

"I believe I did; I understood that he was there as a friend of Silverbridge's."

"His most intimate friend, papa."

"I dare say. He came to me in London yesterday, and told me——! Oh, Mary, can it be true?"

"Yes, papa," she said, covered up to her forehead with blushes, and with her eyes turned down. In the ordinary affairs of life she was a girl of great courage, who was not given to be shaken from her constancy by the pressure of any present difficulty; but now the terror inspired by her father's voice almost overpowered her.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have engaged yourself to that young man without my approval?"

"Of course you were to have been asked, papa."

"Is that in accordance with your idea of what should be the conduct of a young lady in your position?"

"Nobody meant to conceal anything from you, papa."

"It has been so far concealed. And yet this young man has the self-confidence to come to me and to demand your hand as though it were a matter of course that I should accede to so trivial a request. It is, as a matter of course, quite impossible. You understand that; do you not?" When she did not answer him at once, he repeated the question. "I ask you whether you do not feel that it is altogether impossible?"

"No, papa," she said, in the lowest possible whisper, but still in such a whisper that he could hear the word,

and with so much clearness that he could judge from her voice of the obstinacy of her mind.

"Then, Mary, it becomes my duty to tell you that it is quite impossible. I will not have it thought of. There must be an end of it."

"Why, papa?"

"Why! I am astonished that you should ask me why."

"I should not have allowed him, papa, to go to you unless I had,—unless I had loved him."

"Then you must conquer your love. It is disgraceful and must be conquered."

"Disgraceful!"

"Yes. I am sorry to use such a word to my own child, but it is so. If you will promise to be guided by me in this matter, if you will undertake not to see him any more, I will,—if not forget it,—at any rate pardon it, and be silent. I will excuse it because you were young, and were thrown imprudently in his way. There has, I believe, been some one at work in the matter with whom I ought to be more angry than with you. Say that you will obey me, and there is nothing within a father's power that I will not do for you to make your life happy." It was thus that he strove not to be stern. His heart, indeed, was tender enough, but there was nothing tender in the tone of his voice or in the glance of his eye. Though he was very positive in what he said, yet he was shy and shamefaced even with his own daughter. He, too, had blushed when he told her that she must conquer her love.

That she should be told that she had disgraced herself was terrible to her. That her father should speak of her marriage with this man as an event that was im-

possible made her very unhappy. That he should talk of pardoning her, as for some great fault, was in itself a misery. But she had not on that account the least idea of giving up her lover. Young as she was, she had her own peculiar theory on that matter, her own code of conduct and honour, from which she did not mean to be driven. Of course she had not expected that her father would yield at the first word. He, no doubt, would wish that she should make a more exalted marriage. She had known that she would have to encounter opposition, though she had not expected to be told that she had disgraced herself. As she sat there she resolved that under no pretence would she give up her lover;—but she was so far abashed that she could not find words to express herself. He, too, had been silent for a few moments before he again asked her for her promise.

"Will you tell me, Mary, that you will not see him again?"

"I don't think that I can say that, papa."

"Why not?"

"Oh, papa, how can I, when of all the people in the world I love him the best?"

It is not without a pang that any one can be told that she who is of all the dearest has some other one who to her is the dearest. Such pain fathers and mothers have to bear; and though, I think, the arrow is never so blunted but that it leaves something of a wound behind, there is in most cases, if not a perfect salve, still an ample consolation. The mother knows that it is good that her child should love some man better than all the world beside, and that she should be taken away to become a wife and a mother. And

the father, when that delight of his eyes ceases to assure him that he is her nearest and dearest, though he abandon the treasure of that nearestness and dearestness with a soft melancholy, still knows that it is as it should be. Of course that other "him" is the person she loves the best in the world. Were it not so, how evil a thing it would be that she should marry him! Were it not so with reference to some "him," how void would her life be! But now to the poor Duke, the wound had no salve, no consolation. When he was told that this young Tregear was the owner of his girl's sweet love, was the treasure of her heart, he shrank as though arrows with sharp points were pricking him all over. "I will not hear of such love," he said.

"What am I to say, papa?"

"Say that you will obey me."

Then she sat silent. "Do you not know that he is not fit to be your husband?"

"No, papa."

"Then you cannot have thought much either of your position or of mine."

"He is a gentleman, papa."

"So is my private secretary. There is not a clerk in one of our public offices who does not consider himself to be a gentleman. The curate of the parish is a gentleman, and the medical man who comes here from Bradstock. The word is too vague to carry with it any meaning that ought to be serviceable to you in thinking of such a matter."

"I do not know any other way of dividing people," said she, showing thereby that she had altogether made up her mind as to what ought to be serviceable to her.

"You are not called upon to divide people. That

division requires so much experience that you are bound in this matter to rely upon those to whom your obedience is due. I cannot but think you must have known that you were not entitled to give your love to any man without being assured that the man would be approved of by—by—by me." He was going to say, "your parents," but was stopped by the remembrance of his wife's imprudence.

She saw it all, and was too noble to plead her mother's authority. But she was not too dutiful to cast a reproach upon him, when he was so stern to her. "You have been so little with me, papa."

"That is true," he said, after a pause. "That is true. It has been a fault, and I will mend it. It is a reason for forgiveness, and I will forgive you. But you must tell me that there shall be an end to this."

"No, papa."

"What do you mean?"

"That as I love Mr. Tregear, and as I have told him so, and as I have promised him, I will be true to him. I cannot let there be an end to it."

"You do not suppose that you will be allowed to see him again?"

"I hope so."

"Most assuredly not. Do you write to him?"

"No, papa."

"Never?"

"Never since we have been back in England."

"You must promise me that you will not write."

She paused a moment before she answered him, and now she was looking him full in the face. "I shall not write to him. I do not think I shall write to him; but I will not promise."

"Not promise me,—your father!"

"No, papa. It might be that—that I should do it."

"You would not wish me so to guard you that you should have no power of sending a letter but by permission?"

"I should not like that."

"But it will have to be so."

"If I do write I will tell you."

"And show me what you write?"

"No, papa; not that; but I will tell you what I have written."

Then it occurred to him that this bargaining was altogether derogatory to his parental authority, and by no means likely to impress upon her mind the conviction that Tregear must be completely banished from her thoughts. He began already to find how difficult it would be for him to have the charge of such a daughter,—how impossible that he should conduct such a charge with sufficient firmness, and yet with sufficient tenderness! At present he had done no good. He had only been made more wretched than ever by her obstinacy. Surely he must pass her over to the charge of some lady,—but of some lady who would be as determined as was he himself that she should not throw herself away by marrying Mr. Tregear. "There shall be no writing," he said, "no visiting, no communication of any kind. As you refuse to obey me now, you had better go to your room."

CHAPTER IX.

"IN MEDIAS RES."

PERHAPS the method of rushing at once "in medias res" is, of all the ways of beginning a story, or a separate branch of a story, the least objectionable. The reader is made to think that the gold lies so near the surface that he will be required to take very little trouble in digging for it. And the writer is enabled,—at any rate, for a time, and till his neck has become, as it were, warm to the collar,—to throw off from him the difficulties and dangers, the tedium and prolixity, of description. This rushing "in medias res" has doubtless the charm of ease. "Certainly, when I threw her from the garret window to the stony pavement below, I did not anticipate that she would fall so far without injury to life or limb." When a story has been begun after this fashion, without any prelude, without description of the garret or of the pavement, or of the lady thrown, or of the speaker, a great amount of trouble seems to have been saved. The mind of the reader fills up the blanks,—if erroneously, still satisfactorily. He knows, at least, that the heroine has encountered a terrible danger, and has escaped from it with almost incredible good fortune; that the demon of the piece is a bold demon, not ashamed to speak of his own iniquity, and that the heroine and the demon are so far united that they have been in a garret together. But there is the

drawback on the system,—that it is almost impossible to avoid the necessity of doing, sooner or later, that which would naturally be done at first. It answers, perhaps, for half-a-dozen chapters;—and to carry the reader pleasantly for half-a-dozen chapters is a great matter;—but after that a certain nebulous darkness gradually seems to envelop the characters and the incidents. "Is all this going on in the country, or is it in town—or perhaps in the Colonies? How old was she? Was she tall? Is she fair? Is she heroine-like in her form and gait? And, after all, how high was the garret window?" I have always found that the details would insist on being told at last, and that, by rushing "in medias res," I was simply presenting the cart before the horse. But as readers like the cart the best, I will do it once again,—trying it only for a branch of my story,—and will endeavour to let as little as possible of the horse be seen afterwards.

"And so poor Frank has been turned out of heaven?" said Lady Mabel Grex to young Lord Silverbridge.

"Who told you that? I have said nothing about it to anybody."

"Of course he told me himself," said the young beauty. I am aware that, in the word beauty, and perhaps, also, in the word young, a little bit of the horse is appearing; and I am already sure that I shall have to show his head and neck, even if not his very tail.

"Poor Frank! Did you hear it all?"

"I heard nothing, Lady Mab, and know nothing."

"You know that your awful governor won't let him stay any longer in Carlton Terrace?"

"Yes, I know that."

"And why not?"

"Would Lord Grex allow Percival to have his friends living here?" Earl Grex was Lady Mabel's father, Lord Percival was the Earl's son;—and the Earl lived in Belgrave Square. All these are little bits of the horse.

"Certainly not. In the first place, I am here."

"That makes a difference, certainly."

"Of course it makes a difference. They would be wanting to make love to me."

"No doubt. I should, I know."

"And therefore it would n't do for you to live here; and then papa is living here himself. And then the permission never has been given. I suppose Frank did not go there at first without the Duke knowing it."

"I dare say that I had mentioned it."

"You might as well tell me all about it. We are cousins, you know." Frank Tregear through his mother's family was second cousin to Lady Mabel; as was also Lord Silverbridge, one of the Grexes having at some remote period married a Palliser. This is another bit of the horse.

"The governor merely seemed to think that he would like to have his own house to himself,—like other people. What an ass Tregear was to say anything to you about it."

"I don't think he was an ass at all. Of course he had to tell us that he was changing his residence. He says that he is going to take a back bedroom somewhere near the Seven Dials."

"He has got very nice rooms in Duke Street."

"Have you seen him, then?"

"Of course I have."

"Poor fellow! I wish he had a little money; he is so nice. And now, Lord Silverbridge, do you mean

to say that there is not something in the wind about Lady Mary?"

"If there were I should not talk about it," said Lord Silverbridge.

"You are a very innocent young gentleman."

"And you are a very interesting young lady."

"You ought to think me so, for I interest myself very much about you. Was the Duke very angry about your not standing for the county?"

"He was vexed."

"I do think it is so odd that a man should be expected to be this or that in politics because his father happened to be so before him! I don't understand how he should expect that you should remain with a party so utterly snobbish and down in the world as the radicals. Everybody that is worth anything is leaving them."

"He has not left them."

"No, I don't suppose he could; but you have."

"I never belonged to them, Lady Mab."

"And never will, I hope. I always told papa that you would certainly be one of us." All this took place in the drawing-room of Lord Grex's house. There was no Lady Grex alive, but there lived with the Earl a certain elderly lady, reported to be in some distant way a cousin of the family, named Miss Cassewary, who, in the matter of looking after Lady Mab, did what was supposed to be absolutely necessary. She now entered the room with her bonnet on, having just returned from church. "What was the text?" asked Lady Mab at once.

"If you had gone to church, as you ought to have done, my dear, you would have heard it."

"But as I did n't?"

"I don't think the text alone will do you any good."

"And probably you forget it."

"No, I don't, my dear. How do you do, Lord Silverbridge?"

"He is a conservative, Miss Cass."

"Of course he is. I am quite sure that a young nobleman of so much taste and intellect would take the better side."

"You forget that all you are saying is against my father and my family, Miss Cassewary."

"I dare say it was different when your father was a young man. And your father, too, was not very long since at the head of a government which contained many conservatives. I don't look upon your father as a radical, though perhaps I should not be justified in calling him a conservative."

"Well; certainly not, I think."

"But now it is necessary that all noblemen in England should rally to the defence of their order." Miss Cassewary was a great politician, and was one of those who are always foreseeing the ruin of their country. "My dear, I will go and take my bonnet off. Perhaps you will have tea when I come down."

"Don't you go," said Lady Mabel, when Silverbridge got up to take his departure.

"I always do when tea comes."

"But you are going to dine here?"

"Not that I know of. In the first place, nobody has asked me. In the second place, I am engaged. Thirdly, I don't care about having to talk politics to Miss Cass; and fourthly, I hate family dinners on Sunday."

"In the first place, I ask you. Secondly, I know you were going to dine with Frank Tregear, at the club. Thirdly, I want you to talk to me, and not to Miss Cass. And fourthly, you are an uncivil young, —young,—young,—I should say cub if I dared, to tell me that you don't like dining with me any day of the week."

"Of course you know what I mean is, that I don't like troubling your father."

"Leave that to me. I shall tell him you are coming, and Frank too. Of course you can bring him. Then he can talk to me when papa goes down to his club, and you can arrange your politics with Miss Cass." So it was settled, and at eight o'clock Lord Silverbridge reappeared in Belgrave Square with Frank Tregear.

Earl Grex was a nobleman of very ancient family, the Grexes having held the parish of Grex, in Yorkshire, from some time long prior to the Conquest. In saying all this, I am, I know, allowing the horse to appear wholesale;—but I find that he cannot be kept out. I may as well go on to say that the present Earl was better known at Newmarket and the Beaufort,—where he spent a large part of his life in playing whist,—than in the House of Lords. He was a grey-haired, handsome, worn-out old man, who through a long life of pleasure had greatly impaired a fortune which, for an earl, had never been magnificent, and who now strove hard, but not always successfully, to remedy that evil by gambling. As he could no longer eat and drink as he had used to do, and as he cared no longer for the light that lies in a lady's eye, there was not much left to him in the world but cards and racing. Nevertheless he was a handsome old man, of polished man-

ners, when he chose to use them; a staunch conservative and much regarded by his party, for whom in his early life he had done some work in the House of Commons.

"Silverbridge is all very well," he had said; "but I don't see why that young Tregear is to dine here every night of his life."

"This is the second time since he has been up in town, papa."

"He was here last week, I know."

"Silverbridge would n't come without him."

"That 's d—— nonsense," said the Earl. Miss Cassewary gave a start,—not we may presume because she was shocked, for she could not be much shocked, having heard the same word from the same lips very often; but she thought it right always to enter a protest. Then the two young men were announced.

Frank Tregear, having been known by the family as a boy, was Frank to all of them,—as was Lady Mabel, Mabel to him, somewhat to the disgust of the father and not altogether with the approbation of Miss Cass. But Lady Mabel had declared that she would not be guilty of the folly of changing old habits. Silverbridge, being Silverbridge to all his own people, hardly seemed to have a Christian name;—his godfathers and godmothers had indeed called him Plantagenet;—but having only become acquainted with the family since his Oxford days he was Lord Silverbridge to Lady Mabel. Lady Mabel had not as yet become Mabel to him, but, as by her very intimate friends she was called Mab, had allowed herself to be addressed by him as Lady Mab. There was thus between them all considerable intimacy.

"I 'm deuced glad to hear it," said the Earl when dinner was announced. For, though he could not eat much, Lord Grex was always impatient when the time of eating was at hand. Then he walked down alone. Lord Silverbridge followed with his daughter, and Frank Tregear gave his arm to Miss Cassewary. "If that woman can't clear her soup better than that, she might as well go to the d——," said the Earl;—upon which remark no one in the company made any observation. As there were two men-servants in the room when it was made the cook probably had the advantage of it. It may be almost unnecessary to add that though the Earl had polished manners for certain occasions he would sometimes throw them off in the bosom of his own family.

"My lord," said Miss Cassewary—she always called him "my lord"—"Lord Silverbridge is going to stand for the Duke's borough in the conservative interest."

"I did n't know the Duke had a borough," said the Earl.

"He had one till he thought it proper to give it up," said the son, taking his father's part.

"And you are going to pay him off for what he has done by standing against him. It 's just the sort of thing for a son to do in these days. If I had a borough Percival would go down and make radical speeches there."

"There is n't a better conservative in England than Percival," said Lady Mabel, bridling up.

"Nor a worse son," said the father. "I believe he would do anything he could lay his hand on to oppose me." During the past week there had been some little

difference of opinion between the father and the son as to the signing of a deed.

"My father does not take it in bad part at all," said Silverbridge.

"Perhaps he 's ratting himself," said the Earl. "When a man lends himself to a coalition he is as good as half gone."

"I do not think that in all England there is so thorough a liberal as my father," said Lord Silverbridge. "And when I say that he does n't take this badly, I don't mean that it does n't vex him. I know it vexes him. But he does n't quarrel with me. He even wrote down to Barsetshire to say that all my expenses at Silverbridge were to be paid."

"I call that very bad politics," said the Earl.

"It seems to me to be very grand," said Frank.

"Perhaps, sir, you don't know what is good or what is bad in politics," said the Earl, trying to snub his guest.

But it was difficult to snub Frank. "I know a gentleman when I see him, I think," he said. "Of course Silverbridge is right to be a conservative. Nobody has a stronger opinion about that than I have. But the Duke is behaving so well that if I were he I should almost regret it."

"And so I do," said Silverbridge.

When the ladies were gone the old Earl turned himself round to the fire, having filled his glass and pushed the bottles away from him, as though he meant to leave the two young men to themselves. He sat leaning with his head on his hand, looking the picture of woe. It was now only nine o'clock, and there would be no whist at the Beaufort till eleven. There was still more

than an hour to be endured before the brougham would come to fetch him. "I suppose we shall have a majority?" said Frank, trying to rouse him.

"Who does 'we,' mean?" asked the Earl.

"The conservatives, of whom I take the liberty to call myself one."

"It sounded as though you were a very influential member of the party."

"I consider myself to be one of the party, and so I say 'we.'"

Upstairs in the drawing-room Miss Cassewary did her duty loyally. It was quite right that young ladies and young gentlemen should be allowed to talk together, and very right indeed that such a young gentleman as Lord Silverbridge should be allowed to talk to such a young lady as Lady Mabel. What could be so nice as a marriage between the heir of the house of Omnium and Lady Mabel Grex? Lady Mabel looked indeed to be the elder,—but they were in truth the same age. All the world acknowledged that Lady Mabel was very clever and very beautiful and fit to be a duchess. Even the Earl, when Miss Cassewary hinted at the matter to him, grunted an assent. Lady Mabel had already refused one or two not ineligible offers, and it was necessary that something should be done. There had been at one time a fear in Miss Cassewary's bosom lest her charge should fall too deeply in love with Frank Tregear;—but Miss Cassewary knew that whatever danger there might have been in that respect had passed away. Frank was willing to talk to her, while Mabel and Lord Silverbridge were in a corner together.

"I shall be on tenterhooks now till I know how it is to be at Silverbridge," said the young lady.

"It is very good of you to feel so much interest."

"Of course I feel an interest. Are not you one of us? When is it to be?"

"They say that the elections will be over before the Derby."

"And which do you care for the most?"

"I should like to pull off the Derby, I own."

"From what papa says I should think the other event is the more probable."

"Does n't the Earl stand to win on Prime Minister?"

"I never know anything about his betting. But,—you know his way,—he said you were going to drop a lot of money like a—— I can't quite tell you what he likened you to."

"The Earl may be mistaken."

"You are not betting much, I hope."

"Not plunging. But I have a little money on."

"Don't get into a way of betting."

"Why;—what difference does it make,—to you?"

"Is that kind, Lord Silverbridge?"

"I meant to say that if I did make a mess of it you would n't care about it."

"Yes, I should. I should care very much. I dare say you could lose a great deal of money and care nothing about it."

"Indeed I could not."

"What would be a great deal of money to me. But you would want to get it back again. And in that way you would be regularly on the turf."

"And why not?"

"I want to see better things from you."

"You ought not to preach against the turf, Lady Mab."

"Because of papa? But I am not preaching against the turf. If I were such as you are I would have a horse or two myself. A man in your position should do a little of everything. You should hunt and have a yacht, and stalk deer and keep your own trainer at Newmarket."

"I wish you 'd say all that to my father."

"Of course I mean if you can afford it. I like a man to like pleasure. But I despise a man who makes a business of his pleasures. When I hear that this man is the best whist player in London, and that man the best billiard player, I always know that they can do nothing else, and then I despise them."

"You need n't despise me, because I do nothing well," said he as he got up to take his leave.

"I do so hope you 'll get the seat,—and win the Derby."

These were her last words to him as she wished him good night.

CHAPTER X.

"WHY NOT LIKE A ROMEO IF I FEEL LIKE A ROMEO?"

"THAT 's nonsense, Miss Cass, and I shall," said Lady Mabel. They were together, on the morning after the little dinner-party described in the last chapter, in a small back sitting-room which was supposed to be Lady Mabel's own, and the servant had just announced the fact that Mr. Tregear was below.

"Then I shall go down too," said Miss Cassewary.

"You 'll do nothing of the kind. Will you please to tell me what it is you are afraid of? Do you think that Frank is going to make love to me again?"

"No."

"Or that if I chose that he should I would let you stop me? He is in love with somebody else,—and perhaps I am too. And we are two paupers."

"My lord would not approve of it."

"If you know what my lord approves of and what he disapproves you understand him a great deal better than I do. And if you mind what he approves or disapproves, you care for his opinion a great deal more than I do. My cousin is here now to talk to me,—about his own affairs, and I mean to see him,—alone." Then she left the little room, and went down to that in which Frank was waiting for her without the company of Miss Cassewary.

"Do you really mean," she said after they had been

together for some minutes, "that you had the courage to ask the Duke for his daughter's hand?"

"Why not?"

"I believe you would dare do anything."

"I could n't very well take it without asking him."

"As I am not acquainted with the young lady I don't know how that might be."

"And if I took her so, I should have to take her empty-handed."

"Which would n't suit;—would it?"

"It would n't suit for her,—whose comforts and happiness are much more to me than my own."

"No doubt! Of course you are terribly in love."

"Very thoroughly in love, I think, I am."

"For the tenth time, I should say."

"For the second only. I don't regard myself as a monument of constancy, but I think I am less fickle than some other people."

"Meaning me!"

"Not especially."

"Frank, that is ill-natured, and almost unmanly,—and false also. When have I been fickle? You say that there was one before with you. I say that there has never really been one with me at all. No one knows that better than yourself. I cannot afford to be in love till I am quite sure that the man is fit to be, and will be, my husband."

"I doubt sometimes whether you are capable of being in love with any one."

"I think I am," she said very gently. "But I am at any rate capable of not being in love till I wish it. Come, Frank; do not quarrel with me. You know,—you ought to know that I should have loved you had

it not been that such love would have been bad for both of us."

"It is a kind of self-restraint I do not understand."

"Because you are not a woman."

"Why did you twit me with changing my love?"

"Because I am a woman. Can't you forgive as much as that to me?"

"Certainly. Only you must not think that I have been false because I now love her so dearly."

"I do not think you are false. I would do anything to help you if there were anything I could do. But when you spoke so like a Romeo of your love——"

"Why not like a Romeo if I feel like a Romeo?"

"But I doubt whether Romeo talked much to Rosalind of his love for Juliet. But you shall talk to me of yours for Lady Mary, and I will listen to you patiently and encourage you, and will not even think of those former vows."

"The former vows were foolish."

"Oh,—of course."

"You at least used to say so."

"I say so now, and they shall be as though they had never been spoken. So you bearded the Duke in his den, and asked him for Lady Mary's hand,—just as though you had been a young Duke yourself and owned half a county?"

"Just the same."

"And what did he say?"

"He swore that it was impossible.—Of course I knew all that before."

"How will it be now? You will not give it up?"

"Certainly not."

"And Lady Mary?"

"One human being can perhaps never answer for another with perfect security."

"But you feel sure of her?"

"I do."

"He, I should think, can be very imperious."

"And so can she. The Pallisers are all obstinate."

"Is Silverbridge obstinate?" she asked.

"Stiff-necked as a bull if he takes it into his head to be so."

"I should n't have thought it."

"No;—because he is so soft in his manner, and often finds it easier to be led by others than to direct himself."

Then she remained silent for a few seconds. They were both thinking of the same thing, and both wishing to speak of it. But the words came to her first.

"I wonder what he thinks of me." Whereupon Tregear only smiled. "I suppose he has spoken to you about me?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Why!"

"And why should I tell you? Suppose he should have said to me in the confidence of friendship that he thinks you ugly and stupid."

"I am sure he has not said that. He has eyes to see and ears to hear. But, though I am neither ugly nor stupid, he need n't like me."

"Do you want him to like you?"

"Yes, I do. Oh yes, you may laugh; but if I did not think that I could be a good wife to him I would not take his hand even to become Duchess of Omnium."

"Do you mean that you love him, Mabel?"

"No; I do not mean that. But I would learn to

love him. You do not believe that?" Here he smiled again and shook his head. "It is as I said before, because you are not a woman and do not understand how women are trammelled. Do you think ill of me because I say this?"

"No, indeed."

"Do not think ill of me if you can help it, because you are almost the only friend that I trust. I almost trust dear old Cass, but not quite. She is old-fashioned and I shock her. As for other women, there is n't one anywhere to whom I would say a word. Only think how a girl such as I am is placed; or indeed any girl. You, if you see a woman that you fancy, can pursue her, can win her and triumph, or lose her and gnaw your heart;—at any rate you can do something. You can tell her that you love her; can tell her so again and again even though she should scorn you. You can set yourself about the business you have taken in hand and can work hard at it. What can a girl do?"

"Girls work hard too sometimes."

"Of course they do;—but everybody feels that they are sinning against their sex. Of love, such as a man's is, a woman ought to know nothing. How can she love with passion when she should never give her love till it has been asked, and not then unless her friends tell her that the thing is suitable? Love such as that to me is out of the question. But, as it is fit that I should be married, I wish to be married well."

"And you will love him after a fashion?"

"Yes;—after a very sterling fashion. I will make his wishes my wishes, his ways my ways, his party my party, his home my home, his ambition my ambition,—his honour my honour." As she said this she stood

up with her hands clenched and head erect, and her eyes flashing. "Do you not know me well enough to be sure that I should be loyal to him?"

"Yes;—I think that you would be loyal."

"Whether I loved him or not, he should love me."

"And you think that Silverbridge would do?"

"Yes, I think that Silverbridge would do. You, no doubt, will say that I am flying high?"

"Not too high. Why should you not fly high? If I can justify myself, surely I cannot accuse you."

"It is hardly the same thing, Frank. Of course, there is not a girl in London to whom Lord Silverbridge would not be the best match that she could make. He has the choice of us all."

"Most girls would think twice before refusing him."

"Very few would think twice before accepting him. Perhaps he wishes to add to his wealth by marrying richly,—as his father did."

"No thought on that subject will ever trouble him. That will be all as it happens. As soon as he takes a sufficient fancy to a girl he will ask her straight off. I do not say that he might not change afterwards, but he would mean it at the time."

"If he had once said the word to me, he should not change. But then what right have I to expect it? What has he ever said about me?"

"Very little. But had he said much I should not tell you."

"You are my friend,—but you are his too; and he, perhaps, is more to you than I am. As his friend it may be your duty to tell him all that I am saying. If so I have been wrong."

"Do you think that I shall do that, Mabel?"

"I do not know. Men are so strong in their friendships."

"Mine with you is the older, and the sweeter. Though we may not be more than friends, I will say that it is the more tender. In my heart of hearts I do not think that Silverbridge could do better."

"Thanks for that, Frank."

"I shall tell him nothing of you that can set him against you."

"And you would be glad to see me his wife?" she said.

"As you must be somebody's wife, and not mine."

"I cannot be yours, Frank; can I?"

"And not mine," he repeated, "I will endeavour to be glad." Who can explain his feelings in such a matter? "Though I most truly love the girl I hope to marry, yet my heart goes back to former things and opens itself to past regrets."

"I know it all," she whispered.

"But you and I must be too wise to permit ourselves to be tormented by such foolish melancholy." As he said this he took her hand, half with the purpose of bidding her good-bye, but partly with the idea of giving some expression to the tenderness of his feelings. But as he did so, the door was opened, and the old Earl shambled into the room.

"What the deuce are you doing here?" he said.

"I have been talking to Lady Mabel."

"For about an hour."

"Indeed, I do not know for how long."

"Papa, he is going to be married." When she said this Frank Tregear turned round and looked at her almost in anger.

"Going to be married, is he? Who is the fortunate woman?"

"I don't think he will let me tell you."

"Not yet, I think," said Frank gloomily. "There is nothing settled."

The old Earl looked puzzled, but Lady Mabel's craft had been successful. If this objectionable young second-cousin had come there to talk about his marriage with another young woman, the conversation must have been innocent. "Where is Miss Cassewary?" asked the Earl.

"I asked her not to come down with me because Frank wished to speak to me about his own affairs. You have no objection to his coming, papa?"

There had been objections raised to any intimacy with Frank Tregear; but all that was now nearly two years since. He had been assured over and over again by Miss Cassewary that he need not be afraid of Frank Tregear, and had in a sort of way assented to the young man's visits. "I think he might find something better to do with his time than hanging about here all day." Frank, shrugging his shoulders, and having shaken hands both with the daughter and father, took his hat and departed. "Who is the girl?" asked the Earl.

"You heard him say that I was not to tell."

"Has she got money?"

"I believe she will have a great deal."

"Then she is a great fool for her pains," said the Earl, shambling off again.

Lady Mabel spent the greater part of the afternoon alone, endeavouring to recall to her mind all that she had said to Frank Tregear and questioning herself as to the wisdom and truth of her own words. She had

intended to tell the truth,—but hardly perhaps the whole truth. The life which was before her,—which it was necessary that she should lead,—seemed to her to be so difficult! She could not clearly see her way to be pure and good and feminine, and at the same time wise. She had been false now;—so far false that she had told her friend that she had never been in love. But she was in love;—in love with him, Frank Tregear. She knew it as thoroughly as it was possible for her to know anything;—and had acknowledged it to herself a score of times.

But she could not marry him. And it was expected, nay, almost necessary that she should marry some one. To that some one, how good she would be! How she would strive by duty and attention, and if possible by affection, to make up for that misfortune of her early love!

And so I hope that I have brought my cart into its appointed place in the front, without showing too much of the horse.

CHAPTER XI.

"CRUEL."

For two or three days after the first scene between the Duke and his daughter,—that scene in which she was forbidden either to see or to write to her lover,—not a word was said at Matching about Mr. Tregear, nor were any steps taken towards curtailing her liberty of action. She had said she would not write to him without telling her father, and the Duke was too proud of the honour of his family to believe it to be possible that she should deceive him. Nor was it possible.

Not only would her own idea of duty prevent her from writing to her lover, although she had stipulated for the right to do so in some possible emergency,—but, carried far beyond that in her sense of what was right and wrong, she felt it now incumbent on her to have no secret from her father at all. The secret, as long as it had been a secret, had been a legacy from her mother,—and had been kept, at her lover's instance, during that period of mourning for her mother in which it would, she thought, have been indecorous that there should be any question of love or of giving in marriage. It had been a burden to her, though a necessary burden. She had been very clear that the revelation should be made to her father, when it was made, by her lover. That had been done,—and now it was open to her to live without any secrecy,—as was her nature. She meant to cling to her lover. She was quite sure of

that. Nothing could divide her from him but his death or hers,—or falseness on his part. But as to marriage, that would not be possible till her father had assented. And as to seeing the man,—ah, yes, if she could do so with her father's assent! She would not be ashamed to own her great desire to see him. She would tell her father that all her happiness depended upon seeing him. She would not be coy in speaking of her love. But she would obey her father.

She had a strong idea that she would ultimately prevail,—an idea also that that "ultimately" should not be postponed to some undefined middle-aged period of her life. As she intended to belong to Frank Tregear, she though it expedient that he should have the best of her days as well as what might be supposed to be the worst;—and she therefore resolved that it would be her duty to make her father understand that though she would certainly obey him, she would look to be treated humanely by him, and not to be made miserable for an indefinite term of years.

The first word spoken between them on the subject, —the first word after that discussion, began with him and was caused by his feeling that her present life at Matching must be sad and lonely. Lady Cantrip had again written that she would be delighted to take her; —but Lady Cantrip was in London and must be in London, at any rate when Parliament should again be sitting. A London life would perhaps, at present, hardly suit Lady Mary. Then a plan had been prepared which might be convenient. The Duke had a house at Richmond, on the river, called The Horns. That should be lent to Lady Cantrip, and Mary should there be her guest. So it was settled between

the Duke and Lady Cantrip. But as yet Lady Mary knew nothing of the arrangement.

"I think I shall go up to town to-morrow," said the Duke to his daughter.

"For long?"

"I shall be gone only one night. It is on your behalf that I am going."

"On my behalf, papa?"

"I have been writing to Lady Cantrip."

"Not about Mr. Tregear?"

"No;—not about Mr. Tregear," said the father with a mixture of anger and solemnity in his tone. "It is my desire to regard Mr. Tregear as though he did not exist."

"That is not possible, papa."

"I have alluded to the inconvenience of your position here."

"Why is it inconvenient?"

"You are too young to be without a companion. It is not fit that you should be so much alone."

"I do not feel it."

"It is very melancholy for you, and cannot be good for you. They will go down to The Horns, so that you will not be absolutely in London, and you will find Lady Cantrip a very nice person."

"I don't care for new people just now, papa," she said. But to this he paid but little heed; nor was she prepared to say that she would not do as he directed. When therefore he left Matching, she understood that he was going to prepare a temporary home for her. Nothing further was said about Tregear. She was too proud to ask that no mention of his name should be made to Lady Cantrip. And he when he left the house

did not think that he would find himself called upon to allude to the subject.

But when Lady Cantrip made some inquiry about the girl and her habits,—asking what were her ordinary occupations, how she was accustomed to pass her hours, to what she chiefly devoted herself,—then at last with much difficulty the Duke did bring himself to tell the story. "Perhaps it is better you should know it all," he said as he told it.

"Poor girl! Yes, Duke, upon the whole it is better that I should know it all," said Lady Cantrip. "Of course he will not come here."

"Oh, dear; I hope not."

"Nor to The Horns."

"I hope he will never see her again anywhere," said the Duke.

"Poor girl!"

"Have I not been right? Is it not best to put an end to such a thing at once?"

"Certainly at once, if it has to be put an end to,—and can be put an end to."

"It must be put an end to," said the Duke very decidedly. "Do you not see that it must be so? Who is Mr. Tregear?"

"I suppose they were allowed to be together."

"He was unfortunately intimate with Silverbridge, who took him over to Italy. He has nothing; not even a profession." Lady Cantrip could not but smile when she remembered the immense wealth of the man who was speaking to her;—and the Duke saw the smile and understood it. "You will understand what I mean, Lady Cantrip. If this young man were in other respects suitable, of course I could find an income for

them. But he is nothing; just an idle seeker for pleasure without the means of obtaining it."

"That is very bad."

"As for rank," continued the Duke energetically, "I do not think that I am specially wedded to it. I have found myself as willing to associate with those who are without it as with those who have it. But for my child, I would wish her to mate with one of her own class."

"It would be best."

"When a young man comes to me who, though I believe him to be what is called a gentleman, has neither rank, nor means, nor profession, nor name, and asks for my daughter, surely I am right to say that such a marriage shall not be thought of. Was I not right?" demanded the Duke persistently.

"But it is a pity that it should be so. It is a pity that they should ever have come together."

"It is indeed, indeed to be lamented,—and I will own at once that the fault was not hers. Though I must be firm in this you are not to suppose that I am angry with her. I have myself been to blame." This he said with a resolution that,—as he and his wife had been one flesh,—all faults committed by her should, now that she was dead, be accepted by him as his faults. "It had not occurred to me that as yet she would love any man."

"Has it gone deep with her, Duke?"

"I fear that all things go deep with her."

"Poor girl!"

"But they shall be kept apart! As long as your great kindness is continued to her they shall be kept apart!"

"I do not think that I should be found good at watching a young lady."

"She will require no watching."

"Then of course they will not meet. She had better know that you have told me."

"She shall know it."

"And let her know also that anything I can do to make her happy shall be done. But, Duke, there is but one cure."

"Time, you mean?"

"Yes, time; but I did not mean time." Then she smiled as she went on. "You must not suppose that I am speaking against my own sex if I say that she will not forget Mr. Tregear till some one else has made himself agreeable to her. We must wait till she can go out a little into society. Then she will find out that there are others in the world besides Mr. Tregear. It so often is the case that a girl's love means her sympathy for him who has chanced to be nearest to her."

The Duke as he went away thought very much of what Lady Cantrip had said to him;—particularly of those last words. "Till some one else has made himself agreeable to her." Was he to send his girl into the world in order that she might find a lover? There was something in the idea which was thoroughly distasteful to him. He had not given his mind much to the matter, but he had felt that a woman should be sought for,—sought for and extracted, cunningly as it were, from some hiding-place, and not sent out into a market to be exposed as for sale. In his own personal history there had been a misfortune,—a misfortune, the sense of which he could never, at any moment, have expressed to any ears, the memory of which had

been always buried deep in his own bosom,—but a misfortune in that no such cunning extraction on his part had won for him the woman to whose hands had been confided the strings of his heart. His wife had undergone that process of extraction before he had seen her, and his marriage with her had been a matter of sagacious bargaining. He was now told that his daughter must be sent out among young men in order that she might become sufficiently fond of some special one to be regardless of Tregear. There was a feeling that in doing so she must lose something of the freshness of the bloom of her innocence. How was this transfer of her love to be effected? Let her go here because she will meet the heir of this wealthy house, who may probably be smitten by her charms; or there because that other young lordling would make a fit husband for her! Let us contrive to throw her into the arms of this man,—or put her into the way of that man! Was his girl to be exposed to this? Surely that method of bargaining to which he had owed his own wife would be better than that. Let it be said,—only he himself most certainly could not be the person to say it;—let it be said to some man of rank and means and fairly good character: "Here is a wife for you with so many thousand pounds, with beauty, as you can see for yourself, with rank and belongings of the highest; very good in every respect;—only that as regards her heart she thinks she has given it to a young man named Tregear. No marriage there is possible; but perhaps the young lady might suit you." It was thus he had been married. There was an absence in it of that romance which, though he had never experienced it in his own life, was always present to his

imagination. His wife had often ridiculed him because he could only live among figures and official details; but to her had not been given the power of looking into a man's heart and feeling all that was there. Yes;—in such bargaining for a wife, in such bargaining for a husband, there could be nothing of the tremulous delicacy of feminine romance; but it would be better than standing at a stall in the market till the sufficient purchaser should come. It never occurred to him that the delicacy, the innocence, the romance, the bloom might all be preserved if he would give his girl to the man whom she said she loved. Could he have modelled her future course according to his own wishes, he would have had her live a gentle life for the next three years, with a pencil perhaps in her hand or a music-book before her;—and then come forth, cleaned as it were by such quarantine from the impurity to which she had been subjected.

When he was back at Matching he at once told his daughter what he had arranged for her, and then there took place a prolonged discussion both as to his view of her future life and as to her own. "You did tell her, then, about Mr. Tregear?" she asked.

"As she is to have charge of you for a time I thought it best."

"Perhaps it is. Perhaps—you were afraid."

"No; I was not afraid," he said angrily.

"You need not be afraid. I shall do nothing elsewhere that I would not do here, and nothing anywhere without telling you."

"I know I can trust you."

"But, papa, I shall always intend to marry Mr. Tregear."

"No!" he exclaimed.

"Yes;—always. I want you to understand exactly how it is. Nothing you can do can separate me from him."

"Mary, that is very wicked."

"It cannot be wicked to tell the truth, papa. I mean to try to do all that you tell me. I shall not see him, or write to him,—unless there should be some very particular reason. And if I did see him or write to him I would tell you. And of course I should not think of—of marrying without your leave. But I shall expect you to let me marry him."

"Never!"

"Then I shall think you are—cruel; and you will break my heart."

"You should not call your father cruel."

"I hope you will not be cruel."

"I can never permit you to marry this man. It would be altogether improper. I cannot allow you to say that I am cruel because I do what I feel to be my duty. You will see other people."

"A great many, perhaps."

"And will learn to,—to,—to forget him."

"Never! I will not forget him. I should hate myself if I thought it possible. What would love be worth if it could be forgotten in that way?" As he heard this he reflected whether his own wife, this girl's mother, had ever forgotten her early love for that Burgo Fitzgerald whom in her girlhood she had wished to marry.

When he was leaving her she called him back again. "There is one other thing I think I ought to say, papa. If Lady Cantrip speaks to me about Mr. Tregear, I

can only tell her what I have told you. I shall never give him up." When he heard this he turned angrily from her, almost stamping his foot upon the ground, when she quietly left the room.

Cruel! She had told him that he would be cruel if he opposed her love. He thought he knew of himself that he could not be cruel,—even to a fly, even to a political opponent. There could be no cruelty without dishonesty, and did he not always struggle to be honest? Cruel to his own daughter!

CHAPTER XII.

AT RICHMOND.

The pity of it! The pity of it! It was thus that Lady Cantrip looked at it. From what the girl's father had said to her she was disposed to believe that the malady had gone deep with her. "All things go deep with her," he had said. And she too from other sources had heard something of this girl. She was afraid that it would go deep. It was a thousand pities! Then she asked herself whether the marriage ought to be regarded as impossible. The Duke had been very positive,—had declared again and again that it was quite impossible, had so expressed himself as to make her aware that he intended her to understand that he would not yield whatever the sufferings of the girl might be. But Lady Cantrip knew the world well and was aware that in such matters daughters are apt to be stronger than their fathers. He had declared Tregear to be a young man with very small means, and intent on such pleasures as require great means for their enjoyment. No worse character could be given to a gentleman who had proposed himself as a son-in-law. But Lady Cantrip thought it possible that the Duke might be mistaken in this. She had never seen Mr. Tregear, but she fancied that she had heard his name, and that the name had been connected with a character different from that which the Duke had given him.

Lady Cantrip, who at this time was a young-looking woman not much above forty, had two daughters, both

of whom were married. The younger about a year since had become the wife of Lord Nidderdale, a middle-aged young man who had been long about town, a cousin of the late Duchess, the heir to a marquisate, and a member of Parliament. The marriage had not been considered to be very brilliant; but the husband was himself good-natured and pleasant, and Lady Cantrip was fond of him. In the first place she went to him for information.

"Oh yes, I know him. He 's one of our set at the Beargarden."

"Not your set now, I hope," she said, laughing.

"Well;—I don't see so much of them as I used to do. Tregear is not a bad fellow at all. He 's always with Silverbridge. When Silverbridge does what Tregear tells him, he goes along pretty straight. But unfortunately there 's another man called Tifto, and when Tifto is in the ascendant then Silverbridge is apt to get a little astray."

"He 's not in debt, then?"

"Who?—Tregear? I should think he 's the last man in the world to owe a penny to any one."

"Is he a betting man?"

"Oh dear, no;—quite the other way up. He 's a severe, sarcastic, bookish sort of fellow,—a chap who knows everything and turns up his nose at people who know nothing."

"Has he got anything of his own?"

"Not much, I should say. If he had had any money he would have married Lady Mab Grex last year."

Lady Cantrip was inclined from what she now learned to think that the Duke must be wrong about the young man. But before Lady Mary joined her she made

further inquiry. She too knew Lady Mabel, and knowing Lady Mabel, she knew Miss Cassewary. She contrived to find herself alone with Miss Cassewary, and asked some further questions about Mr. Tregear. "He is a cousin of my lord's," said Miss Cass.

"So I thought. I wonder what sort of a young man he is. He is a good deal with Lord Silverbridge."

Then Miss Cassewary spoke her opinion very plainly. "If Lord Silverbridge had nobody worse about him than Mr. Tregear he would not come to much harm."

"I suppose he 's not very well off."

"No;—certainly not. He will have a property of some kind, I believe, when his mother dies. I think very well of Mr. Tregear;—only I wish that he had a profession. But why are you asking about him, Lady Cantrip?"

"Nidderdale was talking to me about him and saying that he was so much with Lord Silverbridge. Lord Silverbridge is going into Parliament now, and, as it were, beginning the world, and it would be a thousand pities that he should get into bad hands." It may, however, be doubted whether Miss Cassewary was hoodwinked by this little story.

Early in the second week in May the Duke brought his daughter up to The Horns, and at the same time expressed his intention of remaining in London. When he did so Lady Mary at once asked whether she might not be with him, but he would not permit it. The house in London would, he said, be more gloomy even than Matching.

"I am quite ashamed of giving you so much trouble," Lady Mary said to her new friend.

"We are delighted to have you, my dear."

"But I know that you have been obliged to leave London because I am with you."

"There is nothing I like so much as this place which your father has been kind enough to lend us. As for London, there is nothing now to make me like being there. Both my girls are married, and therefore I regard myself as an old woman who has done her work. Don't you think this place very much nicer than London at this time of the year?"

"I don't know London at all. I had only just been brought out when poor mamma went abroad."

The life they led was very quiet, and must probably have been felt to be dull by Lady Cantrip in spite of her old age and desire for retirement. But the place itself was very lovely. May of all the months of the year is in England the most insidious, the most dangerous, and the most inclement. A great-coat cannot be endured, and without a great-coat who can endure a May wind and live? But of all months it is the prettiest. The grasses are then the greenest, and the young foliage of the trees, while it has all the glory and all the colour of spring vegetation, does not hide the form of the branches as do the heavy masses of the larger leaves which come in the advancing summer. And of all villas near London The Horns was the sweetest. The broad green lawn swept down to the very margin of the Thames, absolutely washing the fringe of grass when the tide was high. And here, along the bank, was a row of flowering ashes the drooping boughs of which in places touched the water. It was one of those spots which when they are first seen make the beholder feel that to be able to live there and look at it always would be happiness enough for life.

At the end of the week there came a visitor to see Lady Mary. A very pretty carriage was driven up to the door of The Horns, and the servant asked for Lady Mary Palliser. The owner of that carriage was Mrs. Finn. Now it must be explained to the reader that there had never been any friendship between Mrs. Finn and Lady Cantrip, though the ladies had met each other. The great political intimacy which had existed between the Duke and Lord Cantrip had created some intimacy also between their wives. The Duchess and Lady Cantrip had been friends,—after a fashion. But Mrs. Finn had never been cordially accepted by those among whom Lady Cantrip chiefly lived. When therefore the name was announced, the servant expressly stating that the visitor had asked for Lady Mary, Lady Cantrip, who was with her guest, had to bethink herself what she would do. The Duke, who was at this time very full of wrath against Mrs. Finn, had not mentioned this lady's name when delivering up the charge of his daughter to Lady Cantrip. At this moment it occurred to her that not improbably Mrs. Finn would cease to be included in the intimacies of the Palliser family from the time of the death of the Duchess,—that the Duke would not care to maintain the old relations, and that he would be as little anxious to do it for his daughter as for himself. If so, could it be right that Mrs. Finn should come down here, to a house which was now in the occupation of a lady with whom she was not on inviting terms, in order that she might thus force herself on the Duke's daughter? Mrs. Finn had not left her carriage, but had sent in to ask if Lady Mary could see her. In all this there was considerable embarrassment. She looked round at her

guest, who had at once risen from her chair. "Would you wish to see her?" asked Lady Cantrip.

"Oh yes;—certainly."

"Have you seen her since,—since you came home from Italy?"

"Oh dear, yes! She was down at Matching when poor mamma died. And papa persuaded her to remain afterwards. Of course I will see her." Then the servant was desired to ask Mrs. Finn to come in;—and while this was being done Lady Cantrip retired.

Mrs. Finn embraced her young friend, and asked after her welfare, and after the welfare of the house in which she was staying,—a house with which Mrs. Finn herself had been well acquainted,—and said half-a-dozen pretty little things in her own quiet pretty way, before she spoke of the matter which had really brought her to The Horns on that day.

"I have had a correspondence with your father, Mary."

"Indeed!"

"And unfortunately one that has been very far from agreeable to me."

"I am sorry for that, Mrs. Finn."

"So am I, very sorry. I may say with perfect truth that there is no man in the world, except my own husband, for whom I feel so perfect an esteem as I do for your father. If it were not that I do not like to be carried away by strong language I would speak of more than esteem. Through your dear mother I have watched his conduct closely, and have come to think that there is perhaps no other man at the same time so just and so patriotic. Now he is very angry with me,—and most unjustly angry."

"Is it about me?"

"Yes;—it is about you. Had it not been altogether about you I would not have troubled you."

"And about——?"

"Yes;—about Mr. Tregear also. When I tell you that there has been a correspondence I must explain that I have written one long letter to the Duke, and that in answer I have received a very short one. That has been the whole correspondence. Here is your father's letter to me." Then she brought out of her pocket a note which Lady Mary read,—covered with blushes as she did so. The note was as follows:

"The Duke of Omnium understands from Mrs. Finn's letter that Mrs. Finn, while she was the Duke's guest at Matching, was aware of a certain circumstance affecting the Duke's honour and happiness,—which circumstance she certainly did not communicate to the Duke. The Duke thinks that the trust which had been placed in Mrs. Finn should have made such a communication imperative. The Duke feels that no further correspondence between himself and Mrs. Finn on the matter could lead to any good result."

"Do you understand it?" asked Mrs. Finn.

"I think so."

"It simply means this,—that when at Matching he had thought me worthy of having for a time the charge of you and of your welfare, that he had trusted me, who was the friend of your dear mother, to take for a time in regard to you the place which had been so unhappily left vacant by her death; and it means also that I de-

ceived him and betrayed that trust by being privy to an engagement on your part, of which he disapproves, and of which he was not then aware."

"I suppose he does mean that."

"Yes, Lady Mary; that is what he means. And he means further to let me know that as I did so foully betray the trust which he had placed in me,—that as I had consented to play the part of assistant to you in that secret engagement,—therefore he casts me off as altogether unworthy of his esteem and acquaintance. It is as though he had told me in so many words that among women he had known none more vile or more false than I."

"Not that, Mrs. Finn."

"Yes; that;—all of that. He tells me that, and then says that there shall be no more words spoken or written about it. I can hardly submit to so stern a judgment. You know the truth, Lady Mary."

"Do not call me Lady Mary. Do not quarrel with me."

"If your father has quarrelled with me, it would not be fit that you and I should be friends. Your duty to him would forbid it. I should not have come to you now did I not feel that I am bound to justify myself. The thing of which I am accused is so repugnant to me, that I am obliged to do something and to say something, even though the subject itself be one on which I would so willingly be silent."

"What can I do, Mrs. Finn?"

"It was Mr. Tregear who first told me that your father was angry with me. He knew what I had done and why, and he was bound to tell me in order that I

might have an opportunity of setting myself right with the Duke. Then I wrote and explained everything,—how you had told me of the engagement, and how I had then urged Mr. Tregear that he should not keep such a matter secret from your father. In answer to my letter I have received—that."

"Shall I write and tell papa?"

"He should be made to understand that from the moment in which I heard of the engagement I was urgent with you and with Mr. Tregear that he should be informed of it. You will remember what passed."

"I remember it all."

"I did not conceive it to be my duty to tell the Duke myself, but I did conceive it to be my duty to see he should be told. Now he writes as though I had known the secret from the first, and as though I had been concealing it from him at the very moment in which he was asking me to remain at Matching on your behalf. That I consider to be hard,—and unjust. I cannot deny what he says. I did know of it while I was at Matching, for it was at Matching that you told me. But he implies that I knew it before. When you told me your story I did feel that it was my duty to see that the matter was not kept longer from him;—and I did my duty. Now your father takes upon himself to rebuke me,—and takes upon himself at the same time to forbid me to write to him again!"

"I will tell him all, Mrs. Finn."

"Let him understand this. I do not wish to write to him again. After what has passed I cannot say I wish to see him again. But I think he should acknowledge to me that he has been mistaken. He need not then fear that I shall trouble him with any reply.

But I shall know that he has acquitted me of a fault of which I cannot bear to think I should be accused." Then she took a somewhat formal though still an affectionate farewell of the girl.

"I want to see papa as soon as possible," said Lady Mary when she was again with Lady Cantrip. The reason for her wish was soon given, and then the whole story told. "You do not think that she should have gone to papa at once?" Lady Mary asked. It was a point of moral law on which the elder woman, who had had girls of her own, found it hard to give an immediate answer. It certainly is expedient that parents should know at once of any engagement by which their daughters may seek to contract themselves. It is expedient that they should be able to prevent any secret contracts. Lady Cantrip felt strongly that Mrs. Finn, having accepted the confidential charge of the daughter, could not, without gross betrayal of trust, allow herself to be the depositary of such a secret. "But she did not allow herself," said Lady Mary, pleading for her friend.

"But she left the house without telling him, my dear."

"But it was because of what she did that he was told."

"That is true; but I doubt whether she should have left him an hour in ignorance."

"But it was I who told her. She would have betrayed me."

"She was not a fit recipient for your confidence, Mary. But I do not wish to accuse her. She seems to be a high-minded woman, and I think that your papa has been hard upon her."

"And mamma knew it always," said Mary. To this Lady Cantrip could give no answer. Whatever cause

for anger the Duke might have against Mrs. Finn, there had been cause for much more against his wife. But she had freed herself from all accusation by death.

Lady Mary wrote to her father, declaring that she was most particularly anxious to see him and talk to him about Mrs. Finn.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DUKE'S INJUSTICE.

No advantage whatever was obtained by Lady Mary's interview with her father. He persisted that Mrs. Finn had been untrue to him when she left Matching without telling him all that she knew of his daughter's engagement with Mr. Tregear. No doubt by degrees that idea which he at first entertained was expelled from his head,—the idea that she had been cognisant of the whole thing before she came to Matching; but even this was done so slowly that there was no moment at which he became aware of any lessened feeling of indignation. To his thinking she had betrayed her trust, and he could not be got by his daughter to say that he would forgive her. He certainly could not be got to say that he would apologise for the accusation he had made. It was nothing less that his daughter asked; and he could hardly refrain himself from anger when she asked it. "There should not have been a moment," he said, "before she came to me and told me all." Poor Lady Mary's position was certainly uncomfortable enough. The great sin,—the sin which was so great that to have known it for a day without revealing it was in itself a damning sin on the part of Mrs. Finn,—was Lady Mary's sin. And she differed so entirely from her father as to think that this sin of her own was a virtue, and that to have spoken of it to him would have been, on the part of Mrs. Finn, a

treachery so deep that no woman ought to have forgiven it! When he spoke of a matter which deeply affected his honour,—she could hardly refrain from asserting that his honour was quite safe in his daughter's hands. And when in his heart he declared that it should have been Mrs. Finn's first care to save him from disgrace, Lady Mary did break out. "Papa, there could be no disgrace." "That for a moment shall be laid aside," he said with that manner by which even his peers in council had never been able not to be awed, "but if you communicate with Mrs. Finn at all you must make her understand that I regard her conduct as inexcusable."

Nothing had been gained, and poor Lady Mary was compelled to write a few lines which were to her most painful in writing.

"My dear Mrs. Finn,—I have seen papa, and he thinks that you ought to have told him when I told you. It occurs to me that that would have been a cruel thing to do, and most unfair to Mr. Tregear, who was quite willing to go to papa, and had only put off doing so because of poor mamma's death. As I had told mamma, of course it was right that he should tell papa. Then I told you, because you were so kind to me! I am so sorry that I have got you into this trouble; but what can I do?

"I told him I must write to you. I suppose it is better that I should, although what I have to say is so unpleasant. I hope it will all blow over in time, because I love you dearly. You may be quite sure of one thing,—that I shall never change." In this assurance the writer was alluding not to her friendship for

her friend but her love for her lover,—and so the friend understood her. "I hope things will be settled some day, and then we may be able to meet.

"Your very affectionate friend,

"MARY PALLISER."

Mrs. Finn, when she received this, was alone in her house in Park Lane. Her husband was down in the North of England. On this subject she had not spoken to him, fearing that he would feel himself bound to take some steps to support his wife under the treatment she had received. Even though she must quarrel with the Duke, she was most anxious that her husband should not be compelled to do so. Their connection had been political rather than personal. There were many reasons why there should be no open cause of disruption between them. But her husband was hot-headed, and, were all this to be told him and that letter shown to him which the Duke had written, there would be words between him and the Duke which would probably make impossible any further connection between them.

It troubled her very much. She was by no means not alive to the honour of the Duke's friendship. Throughout her intimacy with the Duchess she had abstained from pressing herself on him, not because she had been indifferent about him but that she had perceived that she might make her way with him better by standing aloof than by thrusting herself forward. And she had known that she had been successful. She could tell herself with pride that her conduct towards him had been always such as would become a lady of high spirit and fine feeling. She knew that she had

deserved well of him, that in all her intercourse with him, with his uncle, and with his wife, she had given much and had taken little. She was the last woman in the world to let a word on such a matter pass her lips; but not the less was she conscious of her merit towards him. And she had been led to act as she had done by sincere admiration for the man. In all their political troubles, she had understood him better than the Duchess had done. Looking on from a distance she had understood the man's character as it had come to her both from his wife and from her own husband.

That he was unjust to her,—cruelly unjust she was quite sure. He accused her of intentional privity as to a secret which it behoved him to know, and of being a party to that secrecy. Whereas from the moment in which she had heard the secret she had determined that it must be made known to him. She felt that she had deserved his good opinion in all things, but in nothing more than in the way in which she had acted in this matter. And yet he had treated her with an imperious harshness which amounted to insolence. What a letter it was that he had written to her! The very tips of her ears tingled with heat as she read it again to herself. None of the ordinary courtesies of epistle-craft had been preserved either in the beginning or in the end. It was worse even than if he had called her Madam without an epithet. "The Duke understands——" "The Duke thinks——" "The Duke feels——" feels that he should not be troubled with either letters or conversation; the upshot of it all being that the Duke declared her to have shown herself unworthy of being treated like a lady! And this after all that she had done!

She would not bear it. That at present was all that she could say to herself. She was not angry with Lady Mary. She did not doubt but that the girl had done the best in her power to bring her father to reason. But because Lady Mary had failed she, Mrs. Finn, was not going to put up with so grievous an injury. And she was forced to bear all this alone! There was none with whom she could communicate;—no one from whom she could ask advice. She would not bring her husband into a quarrel which might be prejudicial to his position as a member of his political party. There was no one else to whom she would tell the secret of Lady Mary's love. And yet she could not bear this injustice done to her.

Then she wrote as follows to the Duke:

"Mrs. Finn presents her compliments to the Duke of Omnium. Mrs. Finn finds it to be essential to her that she should see the Duke in reference to his letter to her. If his Grace will let her know on what day and at what hour he will be kind enough to call on her, Mrs. Finn will be at home to receive him.

"Park Lane, Thursday, 12th May, 18—."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW MEMBER FOR SILVERBRIDGE.

Lord Silverbridge was informed that it would be right that he should go down to Silverbridge a few days before the election to make himself known to the electors. As the day for the election drew near it was understood that there would be no other candidate. The conservative side was the popular side among the tradesmen of Silverbridge. Silverbridge had been proud to be honoured by the services of the heir of the house of Omnium, even while that heir had been a liberal,—had regarded it as so much a matter of course that the borough should be at his disposal that no question as to politics had ever arisen while he retained the seat. And had the Duke chosen to continue to send them liberals, one after another, when he went into the House of Lords, there would have been no question as to the fitness of the man or men so sent. Silverbridge had been supposed to be a liberal as a matter of course,—because the Palliśers were liberals. But when the matter was remitted to themselves,—when the Duke declared that he would not interfere any more, for it was thus that the borough had obtained its freedom;—then the borough began to feel conservative predilections. "If his Grace really does mean us to do just what we please ourselves, which is a thing we never thought of asking from his Grace, then we find, having turned the matter over among ourselves, that we are

upon the whole conservative." In this spirit the borough had elected a certain Mr. Fletcher; but in doing so the borough had still a shade of fear that it would offend the Duke. The house of Palliser, Gatherum Castle, the Duke of Omnium, and this special Duke himself were all so great in the eyes of the borough, that the first and only strong feeling in the borough was the one of duty. The borough did not altogether enjoy being enfranchised. But when the Duke had spoken once, twice, and thrice, then with a hesitating heart the borough returned Mr. Fletcher. Now Mr. Fletcher was wanted elsewhere, having been persuaded to stand for the county, and it was a comfort to the borough that it could resettle itself beneath the warmth of the wings of the Pallisers.

So the matter stood when Lord Silverbridge was told that his presence in the borough for a few hours would be taken as a compliment. Hitherto no one knew him at Silverbridge. During his boyhood he had not been much at Gatherum Castle, and had done his best to eschew the place since he had ceased to be a boy. All the Pallisers took a pride in Gatherum Castle, but they all disliked it. "Oh yes; I 'll go down," he said to Mr. Morton, who was up in town. "I need n't go to the great barrack, I suppose." The great barrack was the Castle. "I 'll put up at the inn." Mr. Morton begged the heir to come to his own house; but Silverbridge declared that he would prefer the inn, and so the matter was settled. He was to meet sundry politicians,—Mr. Sprugeon and Mr. Sprout and Mr. Du Boung,—who would like to be thanked for what they had done. But who was to go with him! He would naturally have asked Tregear, but from Tregear

he had for the last week or two been, not perhaps estranged, but separated. He had been much taken up with racing. He had gone down to Chester with Major Tifto, and under the Major's auspicious influences had won a little money;—and now he was very anxiously preparing himself for the Newmarket Second Spring Meeting. He had therefore passed much of his time with Major Tifto. And when this visit to Silverbridge was pressed on him he thoughtlessly asked Tifto to go with him. Tifto was delighted. Lord Silverbridge was to be met at Silverbridge by various well-known politicians from the neighbourhood, and Major Tifto was greatly elated by the prospect of such an introduction into the political world.

But no sooner had the offer been made by Lord Silverbridge than he saw his own indiscretion. Tifto was very well for Chester or Newmarket, very well perhaps for the Beargarden, but not very well for an electioneering expedition. An idea came to the young nobleman that if it should be his fate to represent Silverbridge in Parliament for the next twenty years, it would be well that Silverbridge should entertain respecting him some exalted estimation,—that Silverbridge should be taught to regard him as a fit son of his father and a worthy specimen of the British political nobility. Struck by serious reflections of this nature, he did open his mind to Tregear. "I am very fond of Tifto," he said, "but I don't know whether he 's just the sort of fellow to take down to an election."

"I should think not," said Tregear very decidedly.

"He 's a very good fellow, you know," said Silverbridge. "I don't know an honester man than Tifto anywhere."

"I dare say. Or rather, I don't dare say. I know nothing about the Major's honesty, and I doubt whether you do. He rides very well."

"What has that to do with it."

"Nothing on earth. Therefore I advise you not to take him to Silverbridge."

"You need n't preach."

"You may call it what you like. Tifto would not hold his tongue, and there is nothing he could say there which would not be to your prejudice."

"Will you go?"

"If you wish it," said Tregear.

"What will the governor say?"

"That must be your lookout. In a political point of view I shall not disgrace you. I shall hold my tongue and look like a gentleman,—neither of which are in Tifto's power."

And so it was settled, that on the day but one after this conversation Lord Silverbridge and Tregear should go together to Silverbridge. But the Major, when on that same night his noble friend's altered plans were explained to him, did not bear the disappointment with equanimity. "Is n't that a little strange?" he said, becoming very red in the face.

"What do you call strange?" said the lord.

"Well;—I 'd made all my arrangements. When a man has been asked to do a thing like that, he does n't like to be put off."

"The truth is, Tifto, when I came to think of it I saw that, going down to these fellows about Parliament and all that sort of thing, I ought to have a political atmosphere and not a racing or a betting or a hunting atmosphere."

"There is n't a man in London who cares more about politics than I do;—and not very many perhaps who understand them better. To tell you the truth, my lord, I think you are throwing me over."

"I 'll make it up to you," said Silverbridge, meaning to be kind. "I 'll go down to Newmarket with you and stick to you like wax."

"No doubt you 'll do that," said Tifto, who, like a fool, failed to see where his advantage lay. "I can be useful at Newmarket, and so you 'll stick to me."

"Look here, Major Tifto," said Silverbridge; "if you are dissatisfied, you and I can easily separate ourselves."

"I am not dissatisfied," said the little man, almost crying.

"Then don't talk as though you were. As to Silverbridge, I shall not want you there. When I asked you I was only thinking what would be pleasant to both of us; but since that I have remembered that business must be business." Even this did not reconcile the angry little man, who, as he turned away, declared within his own little bosom that he would "take it out of Silverbridge for that."

Lord Silverbridge and Tregear went down to the borough together, and on the journey something was said about Lady Mary,—and something also about Lady Mabel. "From the first, you know," said Lady Mary's brother, "I never thought it would answer."

"Why not answer?"

"Because I know the governor would not have it. Money and rank and those sort of things are not particularly charming to me. But still things should go together. It is all very well for you and me to be

pals, but of course it will be expected that Mary should marry some——"

"Some swell?"

"Some swell, if you will have it."

"You mean to call yourself a swell."

"Yes I do," said Silverbridge, with considerable resolution. "You ought not to make yourself disagreeable, because you understand all about it as well as anybody. Chance has made me the eldest son of a duke and heir to an enormous fortune. Chance has made my sister the daughter of a duke, and an heiress also. My intimacy with you ought to be proof at any rate to you that I don't on that account set myself up above other fellows. But when you come to talk of marriage of course it is a serious thing."

"But you have told me more than once that you have no objection on your own score."

"Nor have I."

"You are only saying what the Duke will think."

"I am telling you that it is impossible, and I told you so before. You and she will be kept apart, and so——"

"And so she 'll forget me."

"Something of that kind."

"Of course I have to trust to her for that. If she forgets me, well and good."

"She need n't forget you. Lord bless me! you talk as though the thing were not done every day. You 'll hear some morning that she is going to marry some fellow who has a lot of money and a good position; and what difference will it make then whether she has forgotten you or not?" It might almost have been supposed that the young man had been acquainted with his mother's history.

After this there was a pause, and there arose conversation about other things, and a cigar was smoked. Then Tregear returned once more to the subject. "There is one thing I wish to say about it all."

"What is that?"

"I want you to understand that nothing else will turn me away from my intention but such a marriage on her part as that of which you speak. Nothing that your father can do will turn me."

"She can't marry without his leave."

"Perhaps not."

"That he 'll never give,—and I don't suppose you look forward to waiting till his death."

"If he sees that her happiness really depends on it he will give his leave. It all depends on that. If I judge your father rightly, he 's just as soft-hearted as other people. The man who holds out is not the man of the firmest opinion, but the man of the hardest heart."

"Somebody will talk Mary over."

"If so, the thing is over. It all depends on her." Then he went on to tell his friend that he had spoken of his engagement to Lady Mabel. "I have mentioned it to no soul but to your father and to her."

"Why to her?"

"Because we were friends together as children. I never had a sister, but she has been more like a sister to me than any one else. Do you object to her knowing it?"

"Not particularly. It seems to me now that everybody knows everything. There are no longer any secrets."

"But she is a special friend."

"Of yours," said Silverbridge.

"And of yours," said Tregear.

"Well, yes;—in a sort of a way. She is the jolliest girl I know."

"Take her all round, for beauty, intellect, good sense and fun at the same time, I don't know any one equal to her."

"It 's a pity you did n't fall in love with her."

"We knew each other too early for that. And then she has not a shilling. I should think myself dishonest if I did not tell you that I could not afford to love any girl who had n't money. A man must live,—and a woman, too."

At the station they were met by Mr. Sprugeon and Mr. Sprout, who, with many apologies for the meanness of such entertainment, took them up to the George and Vulture, which was supposed for the nonce to be the conservative hotel in the town. Here they were met by other men of importance in the borough, and among them by Mr. Du Boung. Now Mr. Sprout and Mr. Sprugeon were conservatives, but Mr. Du Boung was a strong liberal.

"We are, all of us, particularly glad to see your lordship among us," said Mr. Du Boung.

"I have told his lordship how perfectly satisfied you are to see the borough in his lordship's hands," said Mr. Sprugeon.

"I am sure it could not be in better," said Mr. Du Boung. "For myself I am quite willing to postpone any peculiar shade of politics to the advantage of having your father's son as our representative." This Mr. Du Boung said with much intention of imparting both grace and dignity to the occasion. He thought

that he was doing a great thing for the house of Omnium, and that the house of Omnium ought to know it.

"That 's very kind of you," said Lord Silverbridge, who had not read as carefully as he should have done the letters which had been sent to him, and did not therefore quite understand the position.

"Mr. Du Boung had intended to stand himself," said Mr. Sprout.

"But retired in your lordship's favour," said Mr. Sprugeon.

"In doing which I considered that I studied the interest of the borough," said Mr. Du Boung.

"I thought you gave it up because there was hardly a footing for a liberal," said his lordship, very imprudently.

"The borough was always liberal till the last election," said Mr. Du Boung, drawing himself up.

"The borough wishes on this occasion to be magnanimous," said Mr. Sprout, probably having on his mind some confusion between magnanimity and unanimity.

"As your lordship is coming among us, the borough is anxious to sink politics altogether for the moment," said Mr. Sprugeon. There had no doubt been a compact between the Sprugeon and Sprout party and the Du Boung party in accordance with which it had been arranged that Mr. Du Boung should be entitled to a certain amount of glorification in the presence of Lord Silverbridge.

"And it was in compliance with that wish on the part of the borough, my lord," said Mr. Du Boung,—"as to which my own feelings were quite as strong as those of

any other gentleman in the borough,—that I conceived it to be my duty to give way."

"His lordship is quite aware how much he owes to Mr. Du Boung," said Tregear. Whereupon Lord Silverbridge bowed.

"And now what are we to do?" said Lord Silverbridge.

Then there was a little whispering between Mr. Sprout and Mr. Sprugeon. "Perhaps, Mr. Du Boung," said Sprugeon, "his lordship had better call first on Dr. Tempest."

"Perhaps," said the injured brewer, "as it is to be a party affair after all I had better retire from the scene."

"I thought all that was to be given up," said Tregear.

"Oh, certainly," said Sprout. "Suppose we go to Mr. Walker first."

"I 'm up to anything," said Lord Silverbridge; "but of course everybody understands that I am a conservative."

"Oh dear, yes," said Sprugeon.

"We are all aware of that," said Sprout.

"And very glad we 've all of us been to hear it," said the landlord.

"Though there are some in the borough who could have wished, my lord, that you had stuck to the old Palliser politics," said Mr. Du Boung.

"But I have n't stuck to the Palliser politics. Just at present I think that order and all that sort of thing should be maintained."

"Here, here!" said the landlord.

"And now, as I have expressed my views generally, I am willing to go anywhere."

"Then we 'll go to Mr. Walker first," said Sprugeon. Now it was understood that in the borough, among those who really had opinions of their own, Mr. Walker the old attorney stood first as a liberal, and Dr. Tempest the old rector first as a conservative.

"I am glad to see your lordship in the town which gives you its name," said Mr. Walker, who was a hale old gentleman with silvery white hair, over seventy years of age. "I proposed your father for this borough on, I think, six or seven different occasions. They used to go in and out then whenever they changed their offices."

"We hope you 'll propose Lord Silverbridge now," said Mr. Sprugeon.

"Oh; well;—yes. He 's his father's son, and I never knew anything but good of the family. I wish you were going to sit on the same side, my lord."

"Times are changed a little, perhaps," said his lordship.

"The matter is not to be discussed now," said the old attorney. "I understand that. Only I hope you 'll excuse me if I say that a man ought to get up very early in the morning if he means to see further into politics than your father."

"Very early indeed," said Mr. Du Boung, shaking his head.

"That 's all right," said Lord Silverbridge.

"I 'll propose you, my lord. I need not wish you success, because there is no one to stand against you."

Then they went to Dr. Tempest, who was also an old man. "Yes, my lord, I shall be proud to second you," said the rector. "I did n't think that I should ever do that to one of your name in Silverbridge."

"I hope you think I 've made a change for the better," said the candidate.

"You 've come over to my school, of course, and I suppose I am bound to think that a change for the better. Nevertheless I have a kind of idea that certain people ought to be tories and that other certain people ought to be whigs. What does your father say about it?"

"My father wishes me to be in the House, and that he has not quarrelled with me you may know by the fact that had there been a contest he would have paid my expenses."

"A father generally has to do that whether he approves of what his son is about or not," said the caustic old gentleman.

There was nothing else to be done. They all went back to the hotel and Mr. Sprugeon with Mr. Sprout and the landlord drank a glass of sherry at the candidate's expense, wishing him political long life and prosperity. There was no one else whom it was thought necessary that the candidate should visit, and the next day he returned to town with the understanding that on the day appointed in the next week he should come back again to be elected.

And on the day appointed the two young men again went to Silverbridge, and after he had been declared duly elected, the new member of Parliament made his first speech. There was a meeting in the town-hall and many were assembled anxious to hear,—not the lad's opinions, for which probably nobody cared much, —but the tone of his voice and to see his manner. Of what sort was the eldest son of the man of whom the neighbourhood had been so proud? For the county

was in truth proud of their Duke. Of this son whom they had now made a member of Parliament they at present only knew that he had been sent away from Oxford,—not so very long ago,—for painting the dean's house scarlet. The speech was not very brilliant. He told them that he was very much obliged to them for the honour they had done him. Though he could not follow exactly his father's political opinions,—he would always have before his eyes his father's political honesty and independence. He broke down two or three times and blushed, and repeated himself, and knocked his words a great deal too quickly one on the top of another. But it was taken very well, and was better than was expected. When it was over he wrote a line to the Duke.

"My dear Father,—I am member of Parliament for Silverbridge,—as you used to be in the days which I can first remember. I hope you won't think that it does not make me unhappy to have differed from you. Indeed it does. I don't think that anybody has ever done so well in politics as you have. But when a man does take up an opinion I don't see how he can help himself. Of course I could have kept myself quiet; —but then you wished me to be in the House. They were all very civil to me at Silverbridge, but there was very little said.

"Your affectionate son,

"SILVERBRIDGE."

CHAPTER XV.

THE DUKE RECEIVES A LETTER,—AND WRITES ONE.

THE Duke, when he received Mrs. Finn's note demanding an interview, thought much upon the matter before he replied. She had made her demand as though the Duke had been no more than any other gentleman, almost as though she had a right to call upon him to wait upon her. He understood and admired the courage of this;—but nevertheless he would not go to her. He had trusted her with that which of all things was the most sacred to him, and she had deceived him! He wrote to her as follows:

"The Duke of Omnium presents his compliments to Mrs. Finn. As the Duke thinks that no good could result either to Mrs. Finn or to himself from an interview, he is obliged to say that he would rather not do as Mrs. Finn has requested.

"But for the strength of this conviction the Duke would have waited upon Mrs. Finn most willingly."

Mrs. Finn, when she received this, was not surprised. She had felt sure that such would be the nature of the Duke's answer; but she was also sure that if such an answer did come she would not let the matter rest. The accusation was so bitter to her that she would spare nothing in defending herself,—nothing in labour, and nothing in time. She would make him know that

she was in earnest. As she could not succeed in getting into his presence she must do this by letter,—and she wrote her letter, taking two days to think of her words.

"May 18, 18—.

"My dear Duke of Omnium.—As you will not come to me, I must trouble your Grace to read what I fear will be a long letter. For it is absolutely necessary that I should explain my conduct to you. That you have condemned me I am sure you will not deny; —nor that you have punished me as far as the power of punishment was in your hands. If I can succeed in making you see that you have judged me wrongly, I think you will admit your error and beg my pardon. You are not one who from your nature can be brought easily to do this; but you are one who will certainly do it if you can be made to feel that by not doing so you would be unjust. I am myself so clear as to my own rectitude of purpose and conduct, and am so well aware of your perspicuity, that I venture to believe that if you will read this letter I shall convince you.

"Before I go any further I will confess that the matter is one,—I was going to say almost of life and death to me. Circumstances not of my own seeking have for some years past thrown me so closely into intercourse with your family that now to be cast off, and to be put on one side as a disgraced person,—and that so quickly after the death of her who loved me so dearly and who was so dear to me,—is such an affront as I cannot bear and hold up my head afterwards. I have come to be known as her whom your uncle trusted and loved, as her whom your wife trusted and loved,—obscure as I was before;—and as her whom, may I not

say, you yourself trusted? As there was much of honour and very much of pleasure in this, so also was there something of misfortune. Friendships are safest when the friends are of the same standing. I have always felt there was danger, and now the thing I feared has come home to me.

"Now I will plead my case. I fancy that when first you heard that I had been cognisant of your daughter's engagement, you imagined that I was aware of it before I went to Matching. Had I been so, I should have been guilty of that treachery of which you accuse me. I did know nothing of it till Lady Mary told me on the day before I left Matching. That she should tell me was natural enough. Her mother had known it, and for the moment,—if I am not assuming too much in saying so,—I was filling her mother's place. But, in reference to you, I could not exercise the discretion which a mother might have used, and I told her at once, most decidedly, that you must be made acquainted with the fact.

"Then Lady Mary expressed to me her wish,—not that this matter should be kept any longer from you, for that it should be told she was as anxious as I was myself,—but that it should be told to you by Mr. Tregear. It was not for me to raise any question as to Mr. Tregear's fitness or unfitness,—as to which indeed I could know nothing. All I could do was to say that if Mr. Tregear would make the communication at once, I should feel that I had done my duty. The upshot was that Mr. Tregear came to me immediately on my return to London, and agreeing with me that it was imperative that you be informed, went to you and did inform you. In all of that, if I have told the story truly,

where has been my offence? I suppose you will believe me, but your daughter can give evidence as to every word that I have written.

"I think that you have got it into your mind that I have befriended Mr. Tregear's suit, and that, having received this impression, you hold it with the tenacity which is usual to you. There never was a greater mistake. I went to Matching as the friend of my dear friend;—but I stayed there at your request, as your friend. Had I been, when you asked me to do so, a participator in that secret, I could not have honestly remained in the position you assigned to me. Had I done so, I should have deserved your ill opinion. As it is I have not deserved it, and your condemnation of me has been altogether unjust. Should I not now receive from you a full withdrawal of all charge against me, I shall be driven to think that after all the insight which circumstances have given me into your character, I have nevertheless been mistaken in the reading of it.

"I remain,

"Dear Duke of Omnium,

"Yours truly,

"M. Finn.

"I find on looking over my letter that I must add one word further. It might seem that I am asking for a return of your friendship. Such is not my purpose. Neither can you forget that you have accused me,—nor can I. What I expect is that you should tell me that you in your conduct to me have been wrong and that I in mine to you have been right. I must be enabled to feel that the separation between us has come from injury done to me, and not by me."

He did read the letter more than once, and read it with tingling ears, and hot cheeks, and a knitted brow. As the letter went on, and as the woman's sense of wrong grew hot from her own telling of her own story, her words became stronger and still stronger, till at last they were almost insolent in their strength. Were it not that they came from one who did think herself to have been wronged, then certainly they would be insolent. A sense of injury, a burning conviction of wrong sustained, will justify language which otherwise would be unbearable. The Duke felt that, and though his ears were tingling and his brow knitted, he could have forgiven the language, if only he could have admitted the argument. He understood every word of it. When she spoke of tenacity she intended to charge him with obstinacy. Though she had dwelt but lightly on her own services she had made her thoughts on the matter clear enough. "I, Mrs. Finn, who am nobody, have done much to succour and assist you, the Duke of Omnium; and this is the return which I have received!" And then she told him to his face that unless he did something which it would be impossible that he should do, she would revoke her opinion of his honesty! He tried to persuade himself that her opinion about his honesty was nothing to him;—but he failed. Her opinion was very much to him. Though in his anger he had determined to throw her off from him, he knew her to be one whose good opinion was worth having.

Not a word of overt accusation had been made against his wife. Every allusion to her was full of love. But yet how heavy a charge was really made! That such a secret should be kept from him, the father, was

acknowledged to be a heinous fault;—but the wife had known the secret and had kept it from him, the rather! And then how wretched a thing it was for him that any one should dare to write to him about the wife that had been taken away from him! In spite of all her faults her name was so holy to him that it had never once passed his lips since her death, except in low whispers to himself,—low whispers made in the perfect, double-guarded seclusion of his own chamber. "Cora, Cora," he had murmured, so that the sense of the sound and not the sound itself had come to him from his own lips. And now this woman wrote to him about her freely, as though there were nothing sacred, no religion in the memory of her!

"It was not for me to raise any question as to Mr. Tregear's fitness." Was it not palpable to all the world that he was unfit? Unfit! How could a man be more unfit? He was asking for the hand of one who was second only to royalty—who was possessed of everything, who was beautiful, well-born, rich, who was the daughter of the Duke of Omnium, and he had absolutely nothing of his own to offer!

But it was necessary that he should at last come to the consideration of the actual point as to which she had written to him so forcibly. He tried to set himself to the task in perfect honesty. He certainly had condemned her. He had condemned her and had no doubt punished her to the extent of his power. And if he could be brought to see that he had done this unjustly, then certainly must he beg her pardon. And when he considered it all, he had to own that her intimacy with his uncle and his wife had not been so much of her seeking as of theirs. It grieved him now

that it should have been so, but so it was. And after all this,—after the affectionate surrender of herself to his wife's caprices which the woman had made,—he had turned upon her and driven her away with ignominy. That was all true. As he thought of it he became hot, and was conscious of a quivering feeling round his heart. These were bonds indeed! but they were bonds of such a nature as to be capable of being rescinded and cut away altogether by absolute bad conduct. If he could make it good to himself that in a matter of such magnitude as the charge of his daughter she had been untrue to him and had leagued herself against him with an unworthy lover, then, then—all bonds would be rescinded! Then would his wrath be altogether justified! Then would it have been impossible that he should have done aught else than cast her out! As he thought of this he felt sure that she had betrayed him! How great would be the ignominy to him should he be driven to own to himself that she had not betrayed him! "There should not have been a moment," he said to himself over and over again,—"not a moment!" Yes;—she certainly had betrayed him.

There might still be safety for him in that confident assertion of "not a moment"; but had there been anything of that conspiracy of which he had certainly at first judged her to be guilty? She had told her story, and had then appealed to Lady Mary for evidence. After five minutes of perfect stillness,—but five minutes of misery, five minutes during which great beads of perspiration broke out from him and stood upon his brow, he had to confess to himself that he did not want any evidence. He did believe her story. When he allowed himself to think she had been in league with

Tregear he had wronged her. He wiped away the beads from his brow, and again repeated to himself those words which were now his only comfort, "There should not have been a moment;—not a moment!"

It was thus and only thus that he was enabled to assure himself that there need be no acknowledgment of wrong done on his part. Having settled this in his own mind he forced himself to attend a meeting at which his assistance had been asked as to a complex question on Law Reform. The Duke endeavoured to give himself up entirely to the matter; but through it all there was the picture before him of Mrs. Finn waiting for an answer to her letter. If he should confirm himself in his opinion that he had been right, then would any answer be necessary? He might just acknowledge the letter, after the fashion which has come up in official life, than which silence is an insult much more bearable. But he did not wish to insult, nor to punish her further. He would willingly have withdrawn the punishment under which she was groaning could he have done so without self-abasement. Or he might write as she had done,—advocating his own cause with all his strength, using that last one strong argument,—there should not have been a "moment." But there would be something repulsive to his personal dignity in the continued correspondence which this would produce. "The Duke of Omnium regrets to say, in answer to Mrs. Finn's letter, that he thinks no good can be attained by a prolonged correspondence." Such, or of such kind, he thought must be his answer. But would this be a fair return for the solicitude shown by her to his uncle, for the love which had made her so patient a friend to his wife, for the nobility of her own

conduct in many things? Then his mind reverted to certain jewels,—supposed to be of enormous value,—which were still in his possession though they were the property of this woman. They had been left to her by his uncle, and she had obstinately refused to take them. Now they were lying packed in the cellars of certain bankers,—but still they were in his custody. What should he now do in this matter? Hitherto, perhaps once in every six months, he had notified to her that he was keeping them as her curator, and she had always repeated that it was a charge from which she could not relieve him. It had become almost a joke between them. But how could he joke with a woman with whom he had quarrelled after this internecine fashion?

What if he were to consult Lady Cantrip? He could not do so without a pang that would be very bitter to him,—but any agony would be better than that arising from a fear that he had been unjust to one who had deserved well of him. No doubt Lady Cantrip would see it in the same light as he had done. And then he would be able to support himself by the assurance that that which he had judged to be right was approved of by one whom the world would acknowledge to be a good judge on such a matter.

When he got home he found his son's letter telling him of the election at Silverbridge. There was something in it which softened his heart to the young man,—or perhaps it was that in the midst of his many discomforts he wished to find something which at least was not painful to him. That his son and his heir should insist on entering political life in opposition to him was of course a source of pain; but, putting that aside, the thing had been done pleasantly enough, and

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the young member's letter had been written with some good feeling. So he answered the letter as pleasantly as he knew how.

"My dear Silverbridge,—I am glad that you are in Parliament, and am glad also that you should have been returned by the old borough; though I would that you could have reconciled yourself to adhering to the politics of your family. But there is nothing disgraceful in such a change, and I am able to congratulate you as a father should a son, and to wish you long life and success as a legislator.

"There are one or two things I would ask you to remember;—and firstly, this,—that as you have voluntarily undertaken certain duties you are bound as an honest man to perform them as scrupulously as though you were paid for doing them. There was no obligation in you to seek the post;—but having sought it and acquired it you cannot neglect the work attached to it without being untrue to the covenant you have made. It is necessary that a young member of Parliament should bear this in his mind, and especially a member who has not worked his way up to notoriety outside the House, because to him there will be great facility for idleness and neglect.

"And then I would have you always remember the purport for which there is a Parliament elected in this happy and free country. It is not that some men may shine there, that some may acquire power, or that all may plume themselves on being the elect of the nation. It often appears to me that some members of Parliament so regard their success in life,—as the fellows of our colleges do too often, thinking that their fellowships

were awarded for their comfort and not for the furtherance of any object such as education or religion. I have known gentlemen who have felt that in becoming members of Parliament they had achieved an object for themselves instead of thinking that they had put themselves in the way of achieving something for others. A member of Parliament should feel himself to be the servant of his country,—and, like every other servant, he should serve. If this be distasteful to a man he need not go into Parliament. If the harness gall him he need not wear it. But if he takes the trappings, then he should draw the coach. You are there as the guardian of your fellow-countrymen,—that they may be safe, that they may be prosperous, that they may be well governed and lightly burdened,—above all, that they may be free. If you cannot feel this to be your duty, you should not be there at all.

"And I would have you remember also that the work of a member of Parliament can seldom be of that brilliant nature which is of itself charming; and that the young member should think of such brilliancy as being possible to him only at a distance. It should be your first care to sit and listen so that the forms and methods of the House may as it were soak into you gradually. And then you must bear in mind that speaking in the House is but a very small part of a member's work, perhaps that part which he may lay aside altogether with the least stain on his conscience. A good member of Parliament will be good upstairs in the committee rooms, good downstairs to make and to keep a House, good to vote, for his party if it may be nothing better, but for the measures also which he believes to be for the good of his country.

"Gradually, if you will give your thoughts to it, and, above all, your time, the theory of legislation will sink into your mind, and you will find that there will come upon you the ineffable delight of having served your country to the best of your ability.

"It is the only pleasure in life which has been enjoyed without alloy by your affectionate father,

"OMNIUM."

The Duke in writing this letter was able for a few moments to forget Mrs. Finn and to enjoy the work which he had on hand.

CHAPTER XVI.

"POOR BOY!"

THE new member for Silverbridge, when he entered the House to take the oath, was supported on the right and left by two staunch old tories. Mr. Monk had seen him a few minutes previously,—Mr. Monk, who of all liberals was the firmest and than whom no one had been more staunch to the Duke,—and had congratulated him on his election, expressing at the same time some gentle regrets. "I only wish you could have come among us on the other side," he said.

"But I could n't," said the young lord.

"I am sure nothing but a conscientious feeling would have separated you from your father's friends," said the old liberal. And then they were parted, and the member for Silverbridge was bustled up to the table between the two staunch tories.

Of what else was done on that occasion nothing shall be said here. No political work was required from him, except that of helping for an hour or two to crowd the Government benches. But we will follow him as he left the House. There were one or two others quite as anxious as to his political career as any staunch old liberal. At any rate one other. He had promised that as soon as he could get away from the House he would go to Belgrave Square and tell Lady Mabel Grex all about it. When he reached the square it was past seven, but Lady Mabel and Miss Cassewary were

still in the drawing-room. "There seemed to be a great deal of bustle, and I did n't understand much about it," said the member.

"But you heard the speeches?" These were the speeches made on the proposing and seconding of the address.

"Oh yes;—Lupton did it very well. Lord George did n't seem to be quite so good. Then Sir Timothy Beeswax made a speech, and then Mr. Monk. After that I saw other fellows going away, so I bolted too."

"If I were a member of Parliament I would never leave it while the House was sitting," said Miss Cassewary.

"If all were like that there would n't be seats for them to sit upon," said Silverbridge.

"A persistent member will always find a seat," continued the positive old lady.

"I am sure that Lord Silverbridge means to do his duty," said Lady Mabel.

"Oh yes;—I 've thought a good deal about it, and I mean to try. As long as a man is n't called upon to speak I don't see why it should n't be easy enough."

"I 'm so glad to hear you say so! Of course after a little time you will speak. I should so like to hear you make your first speech."

"If I thought you were there, I 'm sure I should not make it at all." Just at this period Miss Cassewary, saying something as to the necessity of dressing, and cautioning her young friend that there was not much time to be lost, left the room.

"Dressing does not take me more than ten minutes," said Lady Mabel. Miss Cassewary declared this to be nonsense, but she nevertheless left the room. Whether

she would have done so if Lord Silverbridge had not been Lord Silverbridge, but had been some young man with whom it would not have been expedient that Lady Mabel should fall in love, may perhaps be doubted. But then it may be taken as certain that under such circumstances Lady Mabel herself would not have remained She had quite realised the duties of life,—had had her little romance,—and had acknowledged that it was foolish.

"I do so hope that you will do well," she said, going back to the parliamentary duties.

"I don't think I shall ever do much. I shall never be like my father."

"I don't see why not."

"There never was anybody like him. I am always amusing myself, but he never cared for amusement."

"You are very young."

"As far as I can learn he was just as he is now at my age. My mother has told me that long before she married him he used to spend all his time in the House. I wonder whether you would mind reading the letter he wrote me when he heard of my election." Then he took the epistle out of his pocket and handed it to Lady Mabel.

"He means all that he says."

"He always does that."

"And he really hopes that you will put your shoulder to the wheel;—even though you must do so in opposition to him."

"That makes no difference. I think my father is a very fine fellow."

"Shall you do all that he tells you?"

"Well;—I suppose not;—except that he advises me

to hold my tongue. I think that I shall do that. I mean to go down there, you know, and I dare say I shall be much the same as others."

"Has he talked to you much about it?"

"No;—he never talks much. Every now and then he will give me a downright lecture, or he will write me a letter like that; but he never talks to any of us."

"How very odd."

"Yes; he is odd. He seems to be fretful when we are with him. A good many things make him unhappy."

"Your poor mother's death."

"That first;—and then there are other things. I suppose he did n't like the way I came to an end at Oxford."

"You were a boy then."

"Of course I was very sorry for it,—though I hated Oxford. It was neither one thing nor another. You were your own master and yet you were not."

"Now you must be your own master."

"I suppose so."

"You must marry, and become a lord of the treasury. 'When I was a child I acted as a child.' You know all about that."

"Oh yes. And now I must throw off childish things. You mean that I must n't paint any man's house. Eh, Lady Mab?"

"That and the rest of it. You are a legislator now."

"So is Popplecourt, who took his seat in the House of Lords two or three months ago. He 's the biggest young fool I know out. He could n't even paint a house."

"He is not an elected legislator. It makes all the

difference. I quite agree with what the Duke says. Lord Popplecourt can't help himself. Whether he 's an idle young scamp or not, he must be a legislator. But when a man goes in for it himself, as you have done, he should make up his mind to be useful."

"I shall vote with my party, of course."

"More than that; much more than that. If you did n't care for politics you could n't have taken a line of your own." When she said this she knew that he had been talked into what he had done by Tregear,—by Tregear who had ambition, and intelligence, and capacity for forming an opinion of his own. "If you do not do it for your own sake, you will for the sake of those who,—who,—who are your friends," she said at last, not feeling quite able to tell him that he must do it for the sake of those who loved him.

"There are not very many, I suppose, who care about it."

"Your father."

"Oh yes,—my father."

"And Tregear."

"Tregear has got his own fish to fry."

"Are there none others? Do you think we care nothing about it here?"

"Miss Cassewary!"

"Well;—Miss Cassewary. A man might have a worse friend than Miss Cassewary;—and my father."

"I don't suppose Lord Grex cares a straw about me."

"Indeed he does,—a great many straws. And so do I. Do you think I don't care a straw about it?"

"I don't know why you should."

"Because it is my nature to be earnest. A girl comes out into the world so young that she becomes

serious, and steady as it were, so much sooner than a man does."

"I always think that nobody is so full of chaff as you are, Lady Mab."

"I am not chaffing now in recommending you to go to work in the world like a man." As she said this they were sitting on the same sofa, but with some space between them. When Miss Cassewary had left the room Lord Silverbridge was standing, but after a little he had fallen into the seat, at the extreme corner, and had gradually come a little nearer to her. Now in her energy she put out her hand, meaning perhaps to touch lightly the sleeve of his coat, meaning perhaps not quite to touch him at all. But as she did so he put out his hand and took hold of hers.

She drew it away, not seeming to allow it to remain in his grasp for a moment; but she did so, not angrily, or hurriedly, or with any flurry. She did it as though it were natural that he should take her hand and as natural that she should recover it. "Indeed, I have hardly more than ten minutes left for dressing," she said, rising from her seat.

"If you will say that you care about it, you yourself, I will do my best." As he made this declaration blushes covered his cheeks and forehead.

"I do care about it,—very much; I myself," said Lady Mabel, not blushing at all. Then there was a knock at the door, and Lady Mabel's maid, putting her head in, declared that my lord had come in and had already been some time in his dressing-room. "Good-bye, Lord Silverbridge," she said quite gaily and rather more aloud than would have been necessary, had she not intended that the maid also should hear her.

"Poor boy!" she said to herself as she was dressing. "Poor boy!" Then, when the evening was over, she spoke to herself again about him. "Dear, sweet boy!" And then she sat and thought. How was it that she was so old a woman, while he was so little more than a child? How fair he was, how far removed from conceit, how capable of being made into a man—in the process of time! What might not be expected from him if he could be kept in good hands for the next ten years! But in whose hands? What would she be in ten years, she who already seemed to know the town and all its belongings so well? And yet she was as young in years as he. He, as she knew, had passed his twenty-second birthday,—and so had she. That was all. It might be good for her that she should marry him. She was ambitious, and such a marriage would satisfy her ambition. Through her father's fault, and her brother's, she was likely to be poor. This man would certainly be rich. Many of those who were buzzing around her from day to day were distasteful to her. From among them she knew that she could not take a husband let their rank and wealth be what it might. She was too fastidious, too proud, too prone to think that things should be with her as she liked them! This last was in all things pleasant to her. Though he was but a boy there was a certain boyish manliness about him! The very way in which he had grasped at her hand and had then blushed ruby-red at his own daring had gone far with her. How gracious he was to look at! Dear, sweet boy! Love him! No;—she did not know that she loved him. That dream was over. She was sure, however, that she liked him.

But how would it be with him? It might be well for her to become his wife, but could it be well for him that he should become her husband? Did she not feel that it would be better for him that he should become a man, before he married at all? Perhaps so;—but then if she desisted would others desist? If she did not put out her bait, would there not be other hooks,—others and worse? Would not such a one, so soft, so easy, so prone to be caught and so desirable for the catching, be sure to be made prey of by some snare?

But could she love him? That a woman should not marry a man without loving him, she partly knew. But she thought she knew also that there must be exceptions. She would do her very best to love him. That other man should be banished from her very thoughts. She would be such a wife to him that he should never know that he lacked anything. Poor boy! Sweet, dear boy!

He, as he went away to his dinner, had his thoughts also about her. Of all the girls he knew she was the jolliest,—and of all his friends she was the pleasantest. As she was anxious that he should go to work in the House of Commons he would go to work there. As for loving her! Well;—of course he must marry some one, and why not Lady Mab as well as any one else?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DERBY.

An attendance at the Newmarket Second Spring Meeting had unfortunately not been comfortable with the Silverbridge election. Major Tifto had therefore been obliged to look after the affair alone. "A very useful mare," as Tifto had been in the habit of calling a leggy, thoroughbred, meagre-looking brute named Coalition, was on this occasion confided to the Major's sole care and judgment. But Coalition failed, as coalitions always do, and Tifto had to report to his noble patron that they had not pulled off the event. It had been a match for four hundred pounds, made indeed by Lord Silverbridge, but made at the suggestion of Tifto;—and now Tifto wrote in a very bad humour about it. It had been altogether his lordship's fault in submitting to carry two pounds more than Tifto had thought to be fair and equitable. The match had been lost. Would Lord Silverbridge be so good as to pay the money to Mr. Green Griffin and debit him, Tifto, with his share of the loss?

We must acknowledge that the unpleasant tone of the Major's letter was due quite as much to the ill-usage he had received in reference to that journey to Silverbridge, as to the loss of the race. Within that little body there was a high-mounting heart, and that heart had been greatly wounded by his lordship's treatment. Tifto had felt himself to have been treated like a ser-

vant. Hardly an excuse had even been made. He had been simply told that he was not wanted. He was apt sometimes to tell himself that he knew on which side his bread was buttered. But perhaps he hardly knew how best to keep the butter going. There was a little pride about him which was antagonistic to the best interests of such a trade as his. Perhaps it was well that he should inwardly suffer when injured. But it could not be well that he should declare to such men as Nidderdale, and Dolly Longstaff, and Popplecourt that he did n't mean to put up with that sort of thing. He certainly should not have spoken in this strain before Tregear. Of all men living he hated and feared him the most. And he knew that no other man loved Silverbridge as did Tregear. Had he been thinking of his bread and butter, instead of giving way to the mighty anger of his little bosom, he would have hardly declared openly at the club that he would let Lord Silverbridge know that he did not mean to stand any man's airs. But these extravagances were due perhaps to whiskey and water, and that kind of intoxication which comes to certain men from momentary triumphs. Tifto could always be got to make a fool of himself when surrounded by three or four men of rank who, for the occasion, would talk to him as an equal. He almost declared that Coalition had lost his match because he had not been taken down to Silverbridge.

"Tifto is in a deuce of a way with you," said Dolly Longstaff to the young member.

"I know all about it," said Silverbridge, who had had an interview with his partner since the race.

"If you don't take care he 'll dismiss you."

Silverbridge did not care much about this, knowing that words of wisdom did not ordinarily fall from the mouth of Dolly Longstaff. But he was more moved when his friend Tregear spoke to him. "I wish you knew the kind of things that fellow Tifto says behind your back."

"As if I cared!"

"But you ought to care."

"Do you care what every fellow says about you?"

"I care very much what those say whom I choose to live with me. Whatever Tifto might say about me would be quite indifferent to me because we have nothing in common. But you and he are bound together."

"We have a horse or two in common; that 's all."

"But that is a great deal. The truth is he 's a nasty, brawling, boasting, ill-conditioned little reptile."

Silverbridge of course did not acknowledge that this was true. But he felt it, and almost repented of his trust in Tifto. But still Prime Minister stood very well for the Derby. He was second favourite, the odds against him being only four to one. The glory of being part owner of a probable winner of the Derby was so much to him that he could not bring himself to be altogether angry with Tifto. There was no doubt that the horse's present condition was due entirely to Tifto's care. Tifto spent in these few days just before the race the greatest part of his time in the close vicinity of the horse, only running up to London now and then, as a fish comes up to the surface, for a breath of air. It was impossible that Lord Silverbridge should separate himself from the Major,—at any rate till after the Epsom meeting.

He had paid the money for the match without a word of reproach to his partner, but still with a feeling that things were not quite as they ought to be. In money matters his father had been liberal, but not very definite. He had been told that he ought not to spend above two thousand pounds a year, and had been reminded that there was a house for him to use both in town and in the country. But he had been given to understand also that any application made to Mr. Morton, if not very unreasonable, would be attended with success. A solemn promise had been exacted from him that he would have no dealings with money-lenders;—and then he had been set afloat. There had been a rather frequent correspondence with Mr. Morton, who had once or twice submitted a total of the money paid on behalf of his correspondent. Lord Silverbridge, who imagined himself to be anything but extravagant, had wondered how the figures could mount up so rapidly. But the money needed was always forthcoming, and the raising of objections never seemed to be carried back beyond Mr. Morton. His promise to his father about the money-lenders had been scrupulously kept. As long as ready money can be made to be forthcoming without any charge for interest a young man must be very foolish who will prefer to borrow it at twenty-five per cent.

Now had come the night before the Derby, and it must be acknowledged that the young lord was much flattered by the greatness of the coming struggle. Tifto, having seen his horse conveyed to Epsom, had come up to London in order that he might dine with his partner and hear what was being said about the race at the Beargarden. The party dining there con-

sisted of Silverbridge, Dolly Longstaff, Popplecourt, and Tifto. Nidderdale was to have joined them, but he told them on the day before, with a sigh, that domestic duties were too strong for him. Lady Nidderdale,—or if not Lady Nidderdale herself, then Lady Nidderdale's mother,—was so far potent over the young nobleman as to induce him to confine his Derby practices to the Derby day. Another guest had also been expected, the reason for whose non-appearance must be explained somewhat at length. Lord Gerald Palliser, the Duke's second son, was at this time at Cambridge,—being almost as popular at Trinity as his brother had been at Christ Church. It was to him quite a matter of course that he should see his brother's horse run for the Derby. But, unfortunately in this very year, a stand was being made by the University pundits against a practice which they thought had become too general. For the last year or two it had been considered almost as much a matter of course that a Cambridge undergraduate should go to the Derby as that a member of Parliament should do so. Against this three or four rigid disciplinarians had raised their voices,—and as a result, no young man up at Trinity could get leave to be away on the Derby pretext.

Lord Gerald raged against the restriction very loudly. He at first proclaimed his intention of ignoring the college authorities altogether. Of course he would be expelled. But the order itself was to his thinking so absurd,—the idea that he should not see his brother's horse run was so extravagant,—that he argued that his father could not be angry with him for incurring dismissal in so excellent a cause. But his brother

saw things in a different light. He knew how his father had looked at him when he had been sent away from Oxford, and he counselled moderation. Gerald should see the Derby, but should not encounter that heaviest wrath of all which comes from a man's not sleeping beneath his college roof. There was a train which left Cambridge at an early hour and would bring him into London in time to accompany his friends to the racecourse;—and another train, a special, which would take him down after dinner, so that he and others should reach Cambridge before the college gates were shut.

The dinner at the Beargarden was very joyous. Of course the state of the betting in regard to the Prime Minister was the subject generally popular for the night. Mr. Lupton came in, a gentleman well known in all fashionable circles, parliamentary, social, and racing, who was rather older than his company on this occasion, but still not so much so as to be found to be an incumbrance. Lord Glasslough, too, and others joined them, and a good deal was said about the horse. "I never keep these things dark," said Tifto. "Of course he 's an uncertain horse."

"Most horses are," said Lupton.

"Just so, Mr. Lupton. What I mean is the Minister has got a bit of temper. But if he likes to do his best I don't think any three-year-old in England can get his nose past him."

"For half a mile he 'd be nowhere with the Provence filly," said Glasslough.

"I 'm speaking of a Derby distance, my lord."

"That 's a kind of thing nobody really knows," said Lupton.

"I 've seen him 'ave his gallops," said the little man, who in his moments of excitement would sometimes fall away from that exact pronunciation which had been one of the studies of his life, "and 'ave measured his stride. I think I know what pace means. Of course I 'm not going to answer for the 'orse. He 's a temper, but if things go favourably, no animal that ever showed on the Downs was more likely to do the trick. Is there any gentleman here who would like to bet me fifteen to one in hundreds against the two events,—the Derby and the Leger?" The desired odds were at once offered by Mr. Lupton, and the bet was booked.

This gave rise to other betting, and before the evening was over Lord Silverbridge had taken three and a half to one against his horse to such an extent that he stood to lose twelve hundred pounds. The champagne which he had drunk and the news that Quousque the first favourite had so gone to pieces that now there was a question which was the first favourite, had so inflated him, that had he been left alone, he would almost have wagered even money on his horse. In the midst of his excitement, there came to him a feeling that he was allowing himself to do just that which he had intended to avoid. But then the occasion was so peculiar! How often can it happen to a man in his life that he shall own a favourite for the Derby? The affair was one in which it was almost necessary that he should risk a little money.

Tifto, when he got into his bed, was altogether happy. He had added whiskey and water to his champagne, and feared nothing. If Prime Minister should win the Derby he would be able to pay all that he owed

and to make a start with money in his pocket. And then there would be attached to him all the infinite glory of being the owner of a winner of the Derby. The horse was run in his name. Thoughts as to great successes crowded themselves upon his heated brain. What might not be open to him? Parliament! The Jockey Club! The mastership of one of the crack shire packs! Might it not come to pass that he should some day become the great authority in England upon races, race-horses, and hunters? If he could be the winner of a Derby and Leger he thought that Glasslough and Lupton would snub him no longer, that even Tregear would speak to him, and that his pal, the Duke's son, would never throw him aside again.

Lord Silverbridge had bought a drag with all its appendages. There was the coach, the four bay horses, the harness, and the two regulation grooms. When making this purchase he had condescended to say a word to his father on the subject. "Everybody belongs to the four-in-hand club now," said the son.

"I never did," said the Duke.

"Ah,—if I could be like you!"

The Duke had said that he would think about it, and then had told Mr. Morton that he was to pay the bill for this new toy. He had thought about it, and had assured himself that driving a coach and four was at present regarded as a fitting amusement for young men of rank and wealth. He did not understand it himself. It seemed to him to be as unnatural as though a gentleman should turn blacksmith and make horseshoes for his amusement. Driving four horses was hard work. But the same might be said of row-

ing. There were men, he knew, who would spend their days standing at a lathe, making little boxes for their recreation. He did not sympathise with it. But the fact was so, and this driving of coaches was regarded with favour. He had been a little touched by that word his son his had spoken. "Ah,—if I could be like you!" So he had given the permission; the drag, horses, harness, and grooms had come into the possession of Lord Silverbridge; and now they were put into requisition to take their triumphant owner and his party down to Epsom. Dolly Longstaff's team was sent down to meet them half-way. Gerald Palliser, who had come up from Cambridge that morning, was allowed to drive the first stage out of town to compensate him for the cruelty done to him by the University pundits. Tifto, with a cigar in his mouth, with a white hat and a blue veil, and a new light-coloured coat, was by no means the least happy of the party.

How that race was run, and how both Prime Minster and Quousque were beaten by an outsider named Fishknife, Prime Minister, however, coming in a good second, the present writer, having no aptitude in that way, cannot describe. Such, however, were the facts, and then Dolly Longstaff and Lord Silverbridge drove the coach back to London. The coming back was not so triumphant, though the young fellows bore their failure well. Dolly Longstaff had lost a "pot of money," Silverbridge would have to draw upon that inexhaustible Mr. Morton for something over two thousand pounds,—in regard to which he had no doubt as to the certainty with which the money would be forthcoming, but he feared that it would give rise to

special notice from his father. Even the poor younger brother had lost a couple of hundred pounds, for which he would have to make his own special application to Mr. Morton.

But Tifto felt it more than any one. The horse ought to have won. Fishknife had been favoured by such a series of accidents that the whole affair had been a miracle. Tifto had these circumstances at his fingers' ends, and in the course of the afternoon and evening explained them accurately to all who would listen to him. He had this to say on his own behalf,—that before the party had left the course their horse stood first favourite for the Leger. But Tifto was unhappy as he came back to town, and in spite of the lunch, which had been very glorious, sat moody and sometimes even silent within his gay apparel.

"It was the unfairest start I ever saw," said Tifto, almost getting up from his seat on the coach so as to address Dolly and Silverbridge on the box.

"What the —— is the good of that?" said Dolly from the coach-box. "Take your licking and don't squeal."

"That 's all very well. I can take my licking as well as another man. But one has to look to the causes of these things. I never saw Peppermint ride so badly. Before he got round the corner I wished I 'd been on the horse myself."

"I don't believe it was Peppermint's fault a bit," said Silverbridge.

"Well;—perhaps not. Only I did think that I was a pretty good judge of riding." Then Tifto again settled down into silence.

But though much money had been lost, and a great

deal of disappointment had to be endured by our party in reference to the Derby, the most injurious and most deplorable event in the day's history had not occurred yet. Dinner had been ordered at the Beargarden at seven,—an hour earlier than would have been named had it not been that Lord Gerald must be at the Eastern Counties Railway Station at 9 P.M. An hour and a half for dinner and a cigar afterwards, and half an hour to get to the railway station would not be more than time enough.

But of all men alive Dolly Longstaff was the most unpunctual. He did not arrive till eight. The others were not there before half-past seven, and it was nearly eight before any of them sat down. At half-past eight Silverbridge began to be very anxious about his brother, and told him that he ought to start without further delay. A hansom cab was waiting at the door, but Lord Gerald still delayed. He knew, he said, that the special would not start till half-past nine. There were a lot of fellows who were dining about everywhere, and they would never get to the station by the hour fixed. It became apparent to the elder brother that Gerald would stay altogether unless he were forced to go, and at last he did get up and pushed the young fellow out. "Drive like the very devil," he said to the cabman, explaining to him something of the circumstances. The cabman did do his best, but a cab cannot be made to travel from the Beargarden, which, as all the world knows, is close to St. James's Street, to Liverpool Street in the City in ten minutes. When Lord Gerald reached the station the train had started.

At twenty minutes to ten the young man reappeared

at the club. "Why on earth did n't you take a special for yourself!" exclaimed Silverbridge.

"They would n't give me one." After that it was apparent to all of them that what had just happened had done more to ruffle our hero's temper than his failure and loss at the races.

"I would n't have had it to happen for any money you could name," said the elder brother to the younger, as he took him home to Carlton Terrace.

"If they do send me down, what 's the odds?" said the younger brother, who was not quite as sober as he might have been.

"After what happened to me it will almost break the governor's heart," said the heir.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE OF THE RESULTS OF THE DERBY.

On the following morning at about eleven Silverbridge and his brother were at breakfast at a hotel in Jermyn Street. They had slept in Carlton Terrace, but Lord Gerald had done so without the knowledge of the Duke. Lord Silverbridge, as he was putting himself to bed, had made up his mind to tell the story to the Duke at once, but when the morning came his courage failed him. The two young men therefore slunk out of the house, and as there was no breakfasting at the Beargarden, they went to this hotel. They were both rather gloomy, but the elder brother was the more sad of the two. "I 'd give anything I have in the world," he said, "that you had n't come up at all."

"Things have been so unfortunate!"

"Why the deuce would n't you go when I told you?"

"Who on earth would have thought that they 'd have been so punctual? They never are punctual on the Great Eastern. It was an infernal shame. I think I shall go at once to Harnage and tell him all about it." Mr. Harnage was Lord Gerald's tutor.

"But you 've been in ever so many rows before."

"Well,—I 've been gated, and once when they 'd gated me I came right upon Harnage on the bridge at King's."

"What sort of a fellow is he?"

"He used to be good-natured. Now he has taken ever so many crotchets into his head. It was he who began all this about none of the men going to the Derby."

"Did you ask him yourself for leave?"

"Yes. And when I told him about your owning Prime Minister he got savage and declared that was the very reason why I should n't go."

"You did n't tell me that."

"I was determined I would go. I was n't going to be made a child of."

At last it was decided that the two brothers should go down to Cambridge together. Silverbridge would be able to come back to London the same evening, so as to take his drag down to The Oaks on the Friday, —a duty from which even his present misery would not deter him. They reached Cambridge at about three, and Lord Silverbridge at once called at the Master's lodge and sent in his card. The Master of Trinity is so great that he cannot be supposed to see all comers, but on this occasion Lord Silverbridge was fortunate. With much trepidation he told his story. Such being the circumstances, could anything be done to moderate the vials of wrath which must doubtless be poured out over the head of his unfortunate brother?

"Why come to me?" said the Master. "From what you say yourself, it is evident that you know that this must rest with the college tutor."

"I thought, sir, if you would say a word."

"Do you think it would be right that I should interfere for one special man, and that a man of special rank?"

"Nobody thinks that would count for anything. But——"

"But what?" asked the Master.

"If you knew my father, sir!"

"Everybody knows your father;—every Englishman, I mean. Of course I know your father,—as a public man, and I know how much the country owes to him."

"Yes, it does. But it is not that I mean. If you knew how this would,—would,—would break his heart." Then there came a tear into the young man's eye,—and there was something almost like a tear in the eye of the old man too. "Of course it was my fault. I got him to come. He had n't the slightest intention of staying. I think you will believe what I say about that, sir."

"I believe every word you say, my lord."

"I got into a row at Oxford. I dare say you heard. There never was anything so stupid. That was a great grief to my father,—a very great grief. It is so hard upon him because he never did anything foolish himself."

"You should try to imitate him." Silverbridge shook his head. "Or at least not to grieve him."

"That is it. He has got over the affair about me. As I 'm the eldest son I 've got into Parliament, and he thinks perhaps that all has been forgotten. An eldest son may, I fancy, be a greater ass than his younger brother." The Master could not but smile as he thought of the selection which had been made of a legislator. "But if Gerald is sent down, I don't know how he 'll get over it." And now the tears absolutely rolled down the young man's face, so that he was forced to wipe them from his eyes.

The Master was much moved. That a young man should pray for himself would be nothing to him. The discipline of the college was not in his hands, and such prayers would avail nothing with him. Nor would a brother praying simply for a brother avail much. A father asking for his son might be resisted. But the brother asking pardon for the brother on behalf of the father was almost irresistible. But this man had long been in a position in which he knew that no such prayers should ever prevail at all. In the first place, it was not his business. If he did anything, it would only be by asking a favour when he knew that no favour should be granted;—and a favour which he of all men should not ask, because to him of all men it could not be refused. And then the very altitude of the great statesman whom he was invited to befriend,—the position of this Duke who had been so powerful and might be powerful again was against any such interference. Of himself he might be sure that he would certainly have done this as readily for any Mr. Jones as for the Duke of Omnium; but were he to do it it would be said of him that it had been done because the man was Duke of Omnium. These are positions exalted beyond the reach of benevolence, because benevolence would seem to be self-seeking. "Your father, if he were here," said he, "would know that I could not interfere."

"And will he be sent down?"

"I do not know all the circumstances. From your own showing the case seems to be one of great insubordination. To tell the truth, Lord Silverbridge, I ought not to have spoken to you on the subject at all."

"You mean that I should not have spoken to you."

"Well; I did not say so. And if you have been indiscreet I can pardon that. I wish I could have served you; but I fear that it is not in my power." Then Lord Silverbridge took his leave, and going to his brother's rooms waited there till Lord Gerald had returned from his interview with the tutor.

"It 's all up," said he, chucking down his cap, striving to be at his ease. "I may pack up and go—just where I please. He says that on no account will he have anything more to do with me. I asked him what I was to do, and he said that the governor had better take my name off the books of the college. I did ask whether I could n't go over to Maclean."

"Who is Maclean?"

"One of the other tutors. But the brute only smiled."

"He thought you meant it for chaff."

"Well;—I suppose I did mean to show him that I was not going to be exterminated by him. He will write to the governor to-day. And you will have to talk to the governor."

Yes! As Lord Silverbridge went back that afternoon to London he thought very much of that talking to the governor! Never yet had he been able to say anything very pleasant to "the governor." He had himself been always in disgrace at Eton, and had been sent away from Oxford. He had introduced Tregear into the family, which of all the troubles perhaps was the worst. He had changed his politics. He had spent more money than he ought to have done, and now at this very moment must ask for a large sum. And he had brought Gerald up to see the Derby, thereby causing him to be sent away from Cambridge!

And through it all, there was present to him a feeling that by no words which he could use would he be able to make his father understand how deeply he felt all this.

He could not bring himself to see the Duke that evening, and the next morning he was sent for before he was out of bed. He found his father at breakfast with the tutor's letter before him. "Do you know anything about this?" asked the Duke very calmly.

"Gerald ran up to see the Derby, and in the evening missed the train."

"Mr. Harnage tells me that he had been expressly ordered not to go to these races."

"I suppose he was, sir."

Then there was silence between them for some minutes. "You might as well sit down and eat your breakfast," said the father. Then Lord Silverbridge did sit down and poured himself out a cup of tea. There was no servant in the room, and he dreaded to ring the bell. "Is there anything you want?" asked the Duke. There was a small dish of fried bacon on the table, and some cold mutton on the sideboard. Silverbridge, declaring that he had everything that was necessary, got up and helped himself to the cold mutton. Then again there was silence, during which the Duke crunched his toast and made an attempt at reading the newspaper. But, soon pushing that aside, he again took up Mr. Harnage's letter. Silverbridge watched every motion of his father as he slowly made his way through the slice of cold mutton. "It seems that Gerald is to be sent away altogether."

"I fear so, sir."

"He has profited by your example at Oxford. Did you persuade him to come to these races?"

"I am afraid I did."

"Though you knew the orders which had been given?"

"I thought it was meant that he should not be away the night."

"He had asked permission to go to the Derby and had been positively refused. Did you know that?"

Silverbridge sat for some moments considering. He could not at first quite remember what he had known and what he had not known. Perhaps he entertained some faint hope that the question would be allowed to pass unanswered. He saw, however, from his father's eye that that was impossible. And then he did remember it all. "I suppose I did know it."

"And you were willing to imperil your brother's position in life, and my happiness, in order that he might see a horse, of which I believe you call yourself part owner, run a race?"

"I thought there would be no risk if he got back the same night. I don't suppose there is any good in my saying it, but I never was so sorry for anything in all my life. I feel as if I could go and hang myself."

"That is absurd,—and unmanly," said the Duke. The expression of sorrow, as it had been made, might be absurd and unmanly, but nevertheless it had touched him. He was severe because he did not know how far his severity wounded. "It is a great blow,—another great blow! Races! a congregation of all the worst blackguards in the country mixed with the greatest fools."

"Lord Cantrip was there," said Silverbridge, "and I saw Sir Timothy Beeswax."

"If the presence of Sir Timothy be an allurement

to you, I pity you indeed. I have nothing further to say about it. You have ruined your brother." He had been driven to further anger by this reference to one man whom he respected, and to another whom he despised.

"Don't say that, sir."

"What am I to say?"

"Let him be an attaché, or something of that sort."

"Do you believe it possible that he should pass any examination? I think that my children between them will bring me to the grave. You had better go now. I suppose you will want to be—at the races again." Then the young man crept out of the room, and going to his own part of the house shut himself up alone for nearly an hour. What had he better do to give his father some comfort? Should he abandon racing altogether, sell his share of Prime Minister and Coalition, and go in hard and strong for committees, debates, and divisions? Should he get rid of his drag, and resolve to read up parliamentary literature? He was resolved upon one thing at any rate. He would not go to The Oaks that day. And then he was resolved on another thing. He would call on Lady Mab Grex and ask her advice. He felt so disconsolate and insufficient for himself that he wanted advice from some one whom he could trust.

He found Tifto, Dolly Longstaff, and one or two others at the stables from whence it was intended that the drag should start. They were waiting, and rather angry because they had been kept waiting. But the news when it came was very sad indeed. "You would n't mind taking the team down and back yourself; would you, Dolly?" he said to Longstaff.

"You are n't going!" said Dolly, assuming a look of much heroic horror.

"No;—I 'm not going to-day."

"What 's up?" asked Popplecourt.

"That 's rather sudden, is n't it?" asked the Major.

"Well, yes; I suppose it is sudden."

"It 's throwing us over a little, is n't it?"

"Not that I see. You 've got the trap and the horses."

"Yes;—we 've got the trap and the horses," said Dolly, "and I vote we make a start."

"As you are not going yourself, perhaps I 'd better drive your horses," said Tifto.

"Dolly will take the team," said his lordship.

"Yes;—decidedly. I will take the team," said Dolly. "There is n't a deal of driving wanted on the road to Epsom, but a man should know how to hold his reins." This of course gave rise to some angry words, but Silverbridge did not stop to hear them.

The poor Duke had no one to whom he could go for advice and consolation. When his son left him he turned to his newspaper, and tried to read it—in vain. His mind was too ill at ease to admit of political matters. He was greatly grieved by this new misfortune as to Gerald, and by Lord Silverbridge's propensity to racing.

But though these sorrows were heavy there was a sorrow heavier than these. Lady Cantrip had expressed an opinion almost in favour of Tregear—and had certainly expressed an opinion in favour of Mrs. Finn. The whole affair in regard to Mrs. Finn had been explained to her, and she had told the Duke that, according to her thinking, Mrs. Finn had behaved well!

When the Duke, with an energy which was by no means customary with him, had asked that question on the answer to which so much depended, "Should there have been a moment lost?" Lady Cantrip had assured him that not a moment had been lost. Mrs. Finn had at once gone to work and had arranged that the whole affair should be told to him, the Duke, in the proper way. "I think she did," said Lady Cantrip, "what I myself should have done in similiar circumstances."

If Lady Cantrip was right, then must his apology to Mrs. Finn be ample and abject. Perhaps it was this feeling which at the moment was most vexatious to him.

CHAPTER XIX.

"NO, MY LORD, I DO NOT."

Between two and three o'clock Lord Silverbridge, in spite of his sorrow, found himself able to eat his lunch at his club. The place was deserted, the Bear-garden world having gone to the races. As he sat eating cold lamb and drinking soda and brandy he did confirm himself in certain modified resolutions, which might be more probably kept than those sterner laws of absolute renunciation to which he had thought of pledging himself in his half-starved morning condition. His father had spoken in very strong language against racing,—saying that those who went were either fools or rascals. He was sure that this was exaggerated. Half the House of Lords and two-thirds of the House of Commons were to be seen at the Derby; but no doubt there were many rascals and fools, and he could not associate with the legislators without finding himself among the fools and rascals. He would,—as soon as he could,—separate himself from the Major. And he would not bet. It was on that side of the sport that the rascals and the fools showed themselves. Of what service could betting be to him whom Providence had provided with all things wanted to make life pleasant? As to the drag, his father had in a certain measure approved of that, and he would keep the drag, as he must have some relaxation. But his great effort of all should be made in the House of Commons.

He would endeavour to make his father perceive that he had appreciated that letter. He would always be in the House soon after four and would remain there, —or, if possible, as long as the Speaker sat in the chair. He had already begun to feel that there was a difficulty in keeping his seat upon those benches. The half-hours there would be so much longer than elsewhere! An irresistible desire of sauntering out would come upon him. There were men the very sound of whose voices was already odious to him. There had come upon him a feeling in regard to certain orators, that when once they had begun there was no reason why they should ever stop. Words of some sort were always forthcoming like spiders' webs. He did not think that he could learn to take a pleasure in sitting in the House; but he hoped that he might be man enough to do it though it was not pleasant. He would begin to-day instead of going to The Oaks.

But before he went to the House he would see Lady Mabel Grex. And here it may be well to state that in making his resolutions as to a better life, he had considered much whether it would not be well for him to take a wife. His father had once told him that, when he married, the house in Carlton Terrace should be his own. "I will be a lodger if you will have me," said the Duke, "or if your wife should not like that, I will find a lodging elsewhere." This had been in the sadness and tenderness which had immediately followed the death of the Duchess. Marriage would steady him. Were he a married man, Tifto would of course disappear. Upon the whole he thought it would be good that he should marry. And, if so, who could be so nice as Lady Mabel? That

his father would be contented with Lady Mab he was inclined to believe. There was no better blood in England. And Lady Mabel was known to be clever, beautiful, and, in her peculiar circumstances, very wise.

He was aware, however, of a certain drawback. Lady Mabel as his wife would be his superior, and in some degree his master. Though not older she was wiser than he,—and not only wiser but more powerful also. And he was not quite sure but that she regarded him as a boy. He thought that she did love him,—or would do so if he asked her,—but that her love would be bestowed upon him as on an inferior creature. He was already jealous of his own dignity and fearful lest he should miss the glory of being loved by this lovely one for his own sake,—for his own manhood, and his own gifts, and his own character.

And yet his attraction to her was so great that now in the day of his sorrow he could think of no solace but what was to be found in her company. "Not at The Oaks!" she said as soon as he was shown into the drawing-room.

"No;—not at The Oaks. Lord Grex is there, I suppose."

"Oh yes;—that is a matter of course. Why are you a recreant?"

"The House sits to-day."

"How virtuous! Is it coming to that,—that when the House sits you will never be absent?"

"That 's the kind of life I 'm going to lead. You have n't heard about Gerald?"

"About your brother?"

"Yes;—you have n't heard?"

"Not a word. I hope there is no misfortune."

"But indeed there is,—a most terrible misfortune." Then he told the whole story. How Gerald had been kept in London, and how he had gone down to Cambridge,—all in vain; how his father had taken the matter to heart, telling him that he had ruined his brother; and how he, in consequence, had determined not to go to the races. "Then he said," continued Silverbridge, "that his children between them would bring him to his grave."

"That was terrible."

"Very terrible."

"But what did he mean by that?" asked Lady Mabel, anxious to hear something about Lady Mary and Tregear.

"Well, of course what I did at Oxford made him unhappy; and now there is this affair of Gerald's."

"He did not allude to your sister?"

"Yes, he did. You have heard of all that. Tregear told you."

"He told me something."

"Of course my father does not like it."

"Do you approve of it?"

"No," said he—curtly and sturdily.

"Why not? You like Tregear."

"Certainly I like Tregear. He is the friend, among men, whom I like the best. I have only two real friends."

"Who are they?" she asked, sinking her voice very low.

"He is one;—and you are the other. You know that."

"I hoped that I was one," she said. "But if you

love Tregear so dearly, why do you not approve of him for your sister?"

"I always knew it would not do."

"But why not?"

"Mary ought to marry a man of higher standing."

"Of higher rank, you mean. The daughters of dukes have married commoners before."

"It is not exactly that. I don't like to talk of it in that way. I knew it would make my father unhappy. In point of fact, he can't marry her. What is the good of approving of a thing that is impossible?"

"I wish I knew your sister. Is she—firm?"

"Indeed she is."

"I am not so sure that you are."

"No," said he, after considering awhile; "nor am I. But she is not like Gerald or me. She is more obstinate."

"Less fickle, perhaps."

"Yes,—if you choose to call it fickle. I don't know that I am fickle. If I were in love with a girl I should be true to her."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure. If I were really in love with her I certainly should not change. It is possible that I might be bullied out of it."

"But she will not be bullied out of it?"

"Mary? No. That is just it. She will stick to it if he does."

"I would if I were she. Where will you find any young man equal to Frank Tregear?"

"Perhaps you mean to cut poor Mary out."

"That is n't a nice thing for you to say, Lord Silverbridge. Frank is my cousin,—as indeed you are also;

but it so happens that I have seen a great deal of him all my life. And, though I don't want to cut your sister out, as you so prettily say, I love him well enough to understand that any girl whom he loves ought to be true to him." So far what she said was very well, but she afterwards added a word which might have been wisely omitted. "Frank and I are almost beggars."

"What an accursed thing money is!" he exclaimed, jumping up from his chair.

"I don't agree with you at all. It is a very comfortable thing."

"How is anybody who has got it to know if anybody cares for him?"

"You must find that out. There is such a thing, I suppose, as real sympathy."

"You tell me to my face that you and Tregear would have been lovers only that you are both poor."

"I never said anything of the kind."

"And that he is to be passed on to my sister because it is supposed that she will have some money."

"You are putting words into my mouth which I never spoke, and ideas into my mind which I never thought."

"And of course I feel the same about myself. How can a fellow help it? I wish you had a lot of money, I know."

"It is very kind of you;—but why?"

"Well;—I can't quite explain myself," he said, blushing as was his wont. "I dare say it would n't make any difference."

"It would make a great difference to me. As it is, having none, and knowing as I do that papa and Percival are getting things into a worse mess every day,

I am obliged to hope that I may some day marry a man who has got an income."

"I suppose so," said he, still blushing, but frowning at the same time.

"You see I can be very frank with a real friend. But I am sure of myself in this,—that I will never marry a man I do not love. A girl need n't love a man unless she likes it, I suppose. She does n't tumble into love as she does into the fire. It would not suit me to marry a poor man, and so I don't mean to fall in love with a poor man."

"But you do mean to fall in love with a rich one?"

"That remains to be seen, Lord Silverbridge. The rich man will at any rate have to fall in love with me first. If you know of any one you need not tell him to be too sure because he has a good income."

"There 's Popplecourt. He 's his own master, and, fool as he is, he knows how to keep his money."

"I don't want a fool. You must do better for me than Lord Popplecourt."

"What do you say to Dolly Longstaff?"

"He would be just the man, only he never would take the trouble to come out and be married."

"Or Glasslough?"

"I 'm afraid he is cross, and would n't let me have my own way."

"I can only think of one other;—but you would not take him."

"Then you had better not mention him. It is no good crowding the list with impossibles."

"I was thinking of—myself."

"You are certainly one of the impossibles."

"Why, Lady Mab?"

"For twenty reasons. You are too young, and you are bound to oblige your father, and you are to be wedded to Parliament,—at any rate for the next ten years. And altogether it would n't do,—for a great many reasons."

"I suppose you don't like me well enough."

"What a question to ask! No, my lord, I do not. There; that 's what you may call an answer. Don't you pretend to look offended, because if you do, I shall laugh at you. If you may have your joke, surely I may have mine."

"I don't see any joke in it."

"But I do. Suppose I were to say the other thing. 'Oh, Lord Silverbridge, you do me so much honour! And now I come to think about it, there is no one in the world I am so fond of as you.' Would that suit you?"

"Exactly."

"But it would n't suit me. There 's papa. Don't run away."

"It 's ever so much past five," said the legislator, "and I had intended to be in the House more than an hour ago. Good-bye. Give my love to Miss Cassewary."

"Certainly. Miss Cassewary is your most devoted friend. Won't you bring your sister to see me some day?"

"When she is in town I will."

"I should so like to know her. Good-bye."

As he hurried down to the House in a hansom he thought over it all, and told himself that he feared it would not do. She might perhaps accept him, but if so, she would do it simply in order that she might be

come Duchess of Omnium. She might, he thought, have accepted him then, had she chosen. He had spoken plainly enough. But she had laughed at him. He felt that if she loved him, there ought to have been something of that feminine tremor, of that doubting, hesitating, half-avowal of which he had perhaps read in novels, and which his own instincts taught him to desire. But there had been no tremor nor hesitating. "No, my lord, I do not," she had said when he asked her to her face whether she liked him well enough to be his wife. "No, my lord, I do not." It was not the refusal conveyed in these words which annoyed him. He did believe that if he were to press his suit with the usual forms she would accept him. But it was that there should be such a total absence of trepidation in her words and manner. Before her he blushed and hesitated and felt that he did not know how to express himself. If she would only have done the same, then there would have been an equality. Then he could have seized her in his arms and sworn that never, never, never would he care for any one but her.

In truth he saw everything as it was only too truly. Though she might choose to marry him if he pressed his request she would never subject herself to him as he would have the girl do whom he loved. She was his superior, and in every word uttered between them showed that it was so. But yet how beautiful she was; —how much more beautiful than any other thing he had ever seen!

He sat on one of the high seats behind Sir Timothy Beeswax and Sir Orlando Drought, listening, or pretending to listen, to the speeches of three or four gen-

tlemen respecting sugar, thinking of all this till half-past seven;—and then he went to dine with the proud consciousness of having done his duty. The forms and methods of the House were, he flattered himself, soaking into him gradually,—as his father had desired. The theory of legislation was sinking into his mind. The welfare of the nation depended chiefly on sugar. But he thought that, after all, his own welfare must depend on the possession of Mab Grex.

CHAPTER XX.

"THEN HE WILL COME AGAIN."

Lady Mabel, when her young lover left her, was for a time freed from the necessity of thinking about him by her father. He had returned from the Oaks in a very bad humour. Lord Grex had been very badly treated by his son, whom he hated worse than any one else in the world. On the Derby day he had won a large sum of money, which had been to him at the time a matter of intense delight,—for he was in great want of money. But on this day he had discovered that his son and heir had lost more than he had won, and an arrangement had been suggested to him that his winnings should go to pay Percival's losings. This was a mode of settling affairs to which the Earl would not listen for a moment, had he possessed the power of putting a veto upon it. But there had been a transaction lately between him and his son with reference to the cutting off a certain entail under which money was to be paid to Lord Percival. This money had not yet been forthcoming, and therefore the Earl was constrained to assent. This was very distasteful to the Earl, and he came home, therefore, in a bad humour, and said a great many disagreeable things to his daughter. "You know, papa, if I could do anything I would." This she said in answer to a threat, which he had made often before and now repeated, of getting rid altogether of the house in Belgrave Square.

Whenever he made this threat he did not scruple to tell her that the house had to be kept up solely for her welfare. "I don't see why the deuce you don't get married. You 'll have to do it sooner or later." That was not a pleasant speech for a daughter to hear from her father. "As to that," she said, "it must come or not as chance will have it. If you want me to sign anything, I will sign it;"—for she had been asked to sign papers, or, in other words, to surrender rights;—"but for that other matter, it must be left to myself." Then he had been very disagreeable indeed.

They dined out together,—of course with all the luxury that wealth can give. There was a well-appointed carriage to take them backwards and forwards to the next square, such as an earl should have. She was splendidly dressed, as became an earl's daughter, and he was brilliant with some star which had been accorded to him by his sovereign's grateful Minister in return for staunch parliamentary support. No one looking at them could have imagined that such a father could have told such a daughter that she must marry herself out of the way, because as an unmarried girl she was a burden.

During the dinner she was very gay. To be gay was the habit,—we may almost say the work,—of her life. It so chanced that she sat between Sir Timothy Beeswax, who in these days was a very great man indeed, and that very Dolly Longstaff whom Silverbridge in his irony had proposed to her as a fitting suitor for her hand.

"Is n't Lord Silverbridge a cousin of yours?" asked Sir Timothy.

"A very distant one."

"He has come over to us, you know. It is such a triumph."

"I was so sorry to hear it." This, however, as the reader knows, was a fib.

"Sorry!" said Sir Timothy. "Surely Lord Grex's daughter must be a conservative."

"Oh yes;—I am a conservative because I was born one. I think that people in politics should remain as they are born,—unless they are very wise indeed. When men come to be statesmen and all that kind of thing, of course they can change backwards and forwards."

"I hope that is not intended for me, Lady Mabel."

"Certainly not. I don't know enough about it to be personal." That, however, was again not quite true. "But I have the greatest possible respect for the Duke, and I think it a pity that he should be made unhappy by his son. Don't you like the Duke?"

"Well;—yes;—in a way. He is a most respectable man, and has been a good public servant."

"All our lot are ruined, you know," said Dolly, talking of the races.

"Who are your lot, Mr. Longstaff?"

"I 'm one myself."

"I suppose so."

"I 'm utterly smashed. Then there 's Percival."

"I hope he has not lost much. Of course you know he 's my brother."

"Oh laws;—so he is. I always put my foot in it. Well;—he has lost a lot. And so have Silverbridge and Tifto. Perhaps you don't know Tifto."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Tifto."

"He is a major. I think you 'd like Major Tifto.

He 's a sort of racing coach to Silverbridge. You ought to know Tifto. And Tregear is pretty nearly cleared out."

"Mr. Tregear! Frank Tregear!"

"I 'm told he has been hit very heavy. I hope he 's not a friend of yours, Lady Mabel."

"Indeed he is;—a very dear friend and a cousin."

"That 's what I hear. He 's very much with Silverbridge, you know."

"I cannot think that Mr. Tregear has lost money."

"I hope he has n't. I know I have. I wish someone would stick up for me, and say that it was impossible."

"But that is not Mr. Tregear's way of living. I can understand that Lord Silverbridge or Percival should lose money."

"Or me?"

"Or you, if you like to say so."

"Or Tifto?"

"I don't know anything about Mr. Tifto."

"Major Tifto."

"Or Major Tifto;—what does it signify?"

"No;—of course. We inferior people may lose our money just as we please. But a man who can look as clever as Mr. Tregear ought to win always."

"I told you just now that he was a friend of mine."

"But don't you think that he does look clever?" There could be no question but that Tregear, when he disliked his company, could show his dislike by his countenance; and it was not improbable that he had done so in the presence of Mr. Adolphus Longstaff. "Now tell the truth, Lady Mabel; does he not look conceited sometimes?"

"He generally looks as if he knew what he was talking about, which is more than some other people do."

"Of course he is a great deal more clever than I am. I know that. But I don't think even he can be so clever as he looks, 'Or you so stupid,' that 's what you ought to say now."

"Sometimes, Mr. Longstaff, I deny myself the pleasure of saying what I think."

When all this was over she was very angry with herself for the anxiety she had expressed about Tregear. This Mr. Longstaff was, she thought, exactly the man to report all she had said in the public room at the club. But she had been annoyed by what she had heard as to her friend. She knew that he of all men should keep himself free from such follies. Those others had, as it were, a right to make fools of themselves. It had seemed so natural that the young men of her own class should dissipate their fortunes and their reputations by every kind of extravagance! Her father had done so, and she had never even ventured to hope that her brother would not follow her father's example. But Tregear, if he gave way to such follies as these, would soon fall headlong into a pit from which there would be no escape. And if he did fall, she knew herself well enough to be aware that she could not stifle, nor even conceal, the misery which this would occasion her. As long as he stood well before the world she would be well able to assume indifference. But were he to be precipitated into some bottomless misfortunes then she could only throw herself after him. She could see him marry, and smile,—and perhaps even like his wife. And while he was doing so, she could also marry, and

resolve that the husband whom she took should be made to think that he had a loving wife. But were Frank to die,—then must she fall upon his body as though he had been known by all the world to be her lover. Something of this feeling came upon her now, when she heard that he had been betting and had been unfortunate. She had been unable so to subdue herself as to seem to be perfectly careless about it. She had begun by saying that she had not believed it;—but she had believed it. It was so natural that Tregear should have done as the others did with whom he lived! But then the misfortune would be to him so terrible,—so irremediable! The reader, however, may as well know at once that there was not a word of truth in the assertion.

After the dinner she went home alone. There were other festivities to be attended, had she pleased to attend them; and poor Miss Cassewary was dressed ready to go with her as chaperon;—but Miss Cassewary was quite satisfied to be allowed to go to bed in lieu of Mrs. Montacute Jones's great ball. And she had gone to her bedroom when Lady Mabel went to her. "I am glad you are alone," she said, "because I want to speak to you."

"Is anything wrong?"

"Everything is wrong. Papa says he must give up this house."

"He says that almost always when he comes back from the races, and very often when he comes back from the club."

"Percival has lost ever so much."

"I don't think my lord will hamper himself for your brother."

"I can't explain it, but there is some horrible money complication. It is hard upon you and me."

"Who am I?" said Miss Cassewary.

"About the dearest friend that ever a poor girl had. It is hard upon you,—and upon me. I have given up everything,—and what good have I done?"

"It is hard, my dear."

"But after all I do not care much for all that. The thing has been going on so long that one is used to it."

"What is it, then?"

"Ah;—yes;—what is it? How am I to tell you?"

"Surely you can tell me," said the old woman, putting out her hand so as to caress the arm of the younger one.

"I could tell no one else; I am sure of that. Frank Tregear has taken to gambling,—like the rest of them."

"Who says so?"

"He has lost a lot of money at these races. A man who sat next me at dinner,—one of those stupid do-nothing fools that one meets everywhere,—told me so. He is one of the Beargarden set, and of course he knows all about it."

"Did he say how much?"

"How is he to pay anything? Of all things that men do this is the worst. A man who would think himself disgraced forever if he accepted a present of money will not scruple to use all his wits to rob his friend of everything that he has by studying the run of cards or by watching the paces of some brutes of horses! And they consider themselves to be fine gentlemen! A real gentleman should never want the money out of another man's pocket;—should never think of money at all."

"I don't know how that is to be helped, my dear. You have got to think of money."

"Yes;—I have to think of it, and do think of it, and because I do so, I am not what I call a gentleman."

"No;—my dear; you 're a lady."

"Psha! you know what I mean. I might have had the feelings of a gentleman as well as the best man that ever was born; I have n't; but I have never done anything so mean as gambling. Now I have got something else to tell you."

"What is it? You do frighten me so when you look like that."

"You may well be frightened,—for if this all comes round I shall very soon be able to dispense with you altogether. His royal highness, Lord Silverbridge——"

"What do you mean, Mabel?"

"He 's next door to a royal highness at any rate, and a much more topping man than most of them. Well then;—his serene highness the heir of the Duke of Omnium has done me the inexpressible honour of asking me—to marry him."

"No!"

"You may well say, no. And to tell the truth exactly, he did n't."

"Then why do you say he did?"

"I don't think he did quite ask me, but he gave me to understand that he would do so if I gave him any encouragement."

"Did he mean it?"

"Yes;—poor boy! He meant it. With a word;—with a look, he would have been down there kneeling. He asked me whether I liked him well enough. What do you think I did?"

"What did you do?"

"I spared him;—out of sheer, downright, Christian charity! I said to myself, 'Love your neighbours.' 'Don't be selfish.' 'Do unto him as you would he should do unto you,'—that is, think of his welfare. Though I had him in my net, I let him go. Shall I go to heaven for doing that?"

"I don't know," said Miss Cassewary, who was so much perturbed by the news she had heard as to be unable to come to any opinion on the point just raised.

"Or may n't I rather go to the other place? From how much embarrassment should I have relieved my father? What a friend I should have made for Percival? How much I might have been able to do for Frank? And then what a wife I should have made him!"

"I think you would."

"He 'll never get another half so good; and he 'll be sure to get one before long. It is a sort of tenderness that is quite inefficacious. He will become a prey, as I should have made him a prey. But where is there another who will treat him so well?"

"I cannot bear to hear you speak of yourself in that way."

"But it is true. I know the sort of girl he should marry. In the first place she should be two years younger, and four years fresher. She should be able not only to like him and love him but to worship him. How well I can see her! She should have fair hair, and bright green-grey eyes with the sweetest complexion, and the prettiest little dimples,—two inches shorter than me,—and the delight of her life should be to hang with two hands on his arm. She should have a feeling

that her Silverbridge is an Apollo upon earth. To me he is a rather foolish, but very, very sweet-tempered young man;—anything rather than a god. If I thought that he would get the fresh young girl with the dimples, then I ought to abstain."

"If he was in earnest," said Miss Cassewary, throwing aside all this badinage and thinking of the main point, "if he was in earnest, he will come again."

"He was quite in earnest."

"Then he will come again."

"I don't think he will," said Lady Mabel. "I told him that I was too old for him, and I tried to laugh him out of it. He does not like being laughed at. He has been saved, and he will know it."

"But if he should come again?"

"I shall not spare him again;—no;—not twice. I felt it to be hard to do so once, because I so nearly love him! There are so many of them who are odious to me, as to whom the idea of marrying them seems to be mixed somehow with an idea of suicide."

"Oh, Mabel."

"But he is as sweet as a rose. If I were his sister, or his servant, or his dog, I could be devoted to him. I can fancy that his comfort and his success and his name should be everything to me."

"That is what a wife ought to feel."

"But I could never feel him to be my superior. That is what a wife ought in truth to feel. Think of those two young men and the difference between them! Well;—don't look like that at me. I don't often give way, and I dare say after all I shall live to be the Duchess of Omnium." Then she kissed her friend and went away to her own room.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR TIMOTHY BEESWAX.

THERE had lately been a great conservative reaction in the country, brought about in part by the industry and good management of gentlemen who were strong on that side;—but due also in part to the blunders and quarrels of their opponents. That these opponents should have blundered and quarrelled, being men active and in earnest, was to have been expected. Such blunderings and quarrellings have been a matter of course since politics have been politics, and since religion has been religion. When men combine to do nothing, how should there be disagreement? When men combine to do much, how should there not be disagreement? Thirty men can sit still, each as like the other as peas. But put your thirty men up to run a race, and they will soon assume different forms. And in doing nothing you can hardly do amiss. Let the doers of nothing have something of action forced upon them, and they, too, will blunder and quarrel.

The wonder is that there should ever be in a reforming party enough of consentaneous action to carry any reform. The reforming or liberal party in British politics had thus stumbled,—and stumbled till it fell. And now there had been a great conservative reaction! Many of the most liberal constituencies in the country had been untrue to their old political convictions. And, as the result, Lord Drummond was Prime Minister in

the House of Lords,—with Sir Timothy Beeswax acting as first man in the House of Commons.

It cannot be denied that Sir Timothy had his good points as a politician. He was industrious, patient, clear-sighted, intelligent, courageous and determined. Long before he had had a seat in the House, when he was simply making his way up to the probability of a seat by making a reputation as an advocate, he had resolved that he would be more than an attorney-general, more than a judge,—more, as he thought it, than a chief-justice; but at any rate something different. This plan he had all but gained,—and it must be acknowledged that he had been moved by a grand and manly ambition. But there were drawbacks to the utility and beauty of Sir Timothy's character as a statesman. He had no idea as to the necessity or non-necessity of any measure whatever in reference to the well-being of the country. It may, indeed, be said that all such ideas were to him absurd, and the fact that they should be held by his friends and supporters was an inconvenience. He was not in accord with those who declare that a Parliament is a collection of windbags which puff and blow, and crack to the annoyance of honest men. But to him Parliament was a debating place by having a majority in which and by no other means he,—or another,—might become the great man of the day. By no other than parliamentary means could such a one as he come to be the chief man. And this use of Parliament, either on his own behalf or on behalf of others, had been for so many years present to his mind, that there seemed to be nothing absurd in an institution supported for such a purpose. Parliament was a club so eligible in its nature

that all Englishmen wished to belong to it. They who succeeded were acknowledged to be the cream of the land. They who dominated in it were the cream of the cream. Those two who were elected to be the chiefs of the two parties had more of cream in their composition than any others. But he who could be the chief of the strongest party, and who, therefore, in accordance with the prevailing arrangements of the country, should have the power of making dukes, and bestowing garters and appointing bishops, he who by attaining the first seat should achieve the right of snubbing all before him, whether friends or foes, he, according to the feelings of Sir Timothy, would have gained an Elysium of creaminess not to be found in any other position on the earth's surface. No man was more warmly attached to parliamentary government than Sir Timothy Beeswax; but I do not think that he ever cared much for legislation.

Parliamentary management was his forte. There have been various rocks on which men have shattered their barks in their attempts to sail successfully into the harbours of parliamentary management. There is the great senator who declares to himself that personally he will have neither friend nor foe. There is his country before him and its welfare. Within his bosom is the fire of patriotism, and within his mind the examples of all past time. He knows that he can be just, he teaches himself to be eloquent, and he strives to be wise. But he will not bend;—and at last in some great solitude, though closely surrounded by those whose love he had neglected to acquire,—he breaks his heart.

Then there is he who seeing the misfortune of that great one, tells himself that patriotism, judgment, in-

dustry, and eloquence will not suffice for him unless he himself can be loved. To do great things a man must have a great following, and to achieve that he must be popular. So he smiles and learns the necessary wiles. He is all for his country and his friends,—but for his friends first. He too must be eloquent and well instructed in the ways of Parliament, must be wise and diligent; but in all that he does and all that he says he must first study his party. It is well with him for a time;—but he has closed the door of his Elysium too rigidly. Those without gradually become stronger than his friends within, and so he falls.

But may not the door be occasionally opened to an outsider, so that the exterior force be diminished? We know how great is the pressure of water; and how the peril of an overwhelming weight of it may be removed by opening the way for a small current. There comes therefore the statesman who acknowledges to himself that he will be pregnable. That, as a statesman, he should have enemies is a matter of course. Against moderate enemies he will hold his own. But when there comes one immoderately forcible, violently inimical, then to that man he will open his bosom. He will tempt into his camp with an offer of high command any foe that may be worth his purchase. This too has answered well; but there is a Nemesis. The loyalty of officers so procured must be open to suspicion. The man who has said bitter things against you will never sit at your feet in contented submission, nor will your friend of old standing long endure to be superseded by such converts.

All these dangers Sir Timothy had seen and studied, and for each of them he had hoped to be able to pro-

vide an antidote. Love cannot do all. Fear may do more. Fear acknowledges a superior. Love desires an equal. Love is to be created by benefits done, and means gratitude, which we all know to be weak. But hope, which refers itself to benefits to come, is of all our feelings the strongest. And Sir Timothy had parliamentary doctrines concealed in the depths of his own bosom more important even than these. The statesman who falls is he who does much, and thus injures many. The statesman who stands the longest is he who does nothing and injures no one. He soon knew that the work which he had taken in hand required all the art of a great conjurer. He must be possessed of tricks so marvellous that not even they who sat nearest to him might know how they were performed.

For the executive or legislative business of the country he cared little. The one should be left in the hands of men who liked work;—of the other there should be little, or if possible, none. But Parliament must be managed,—and his party. Of patriotism he did not know the meaning;—few, perhaps, do beyond a feeling that they would like to lick the Russians, or to get the better of the Americans in a matter of fisheries or frontiers. But he invented a pseudo-patriotic conjuring phraseology which no one understood, but which many admired. He was ambitious that it should be said of him that he was far-and-away the cleverest of his party. He knew himself to be clever. But he could only be far-and-away the cleverest by saying and doing that which no one could understand. If he could become master of some great hocus-pocus system which could be made to be graceful to the ears and

eyes of many, which might for a while seem to have within it some semi-divine attribute, which should have all but divine power of mastering the loaves and fishes, then would they who followed him believe in him more firmly than other followers who had believed in their leaders. When you see a young woman read a closed book placed on her dorsal vertebræ,—if you do believe that she so reads it,—you think that she is endowed with a wonderful faculty! And should you also be made to believe that the same young woman had direct communication with Abraham, by means of some invisible wire, you would be apt to do a great many things as that young woman might tell you. Conjuring, when not known to be conjuring, is very effective.

Much, no doubt, of Sir Timothy's power had come from his praiseworthy industry. Though he cared nothing for the making of laws, though he knew nothing of finance, though he had abandoned his legal studies, still he worked hard. And because he had worked harder in a special direction than others around him, therefore he was enabled to lead them. The management of a party is a very great work in itself; and when to that is added the management of the House of Commons, a man has enough upon his hands even though he neglects altogether the ordinary pursuits of a statesman. Those around Sir Timothy were fond of their party; but they were for the most part men who had not condescended to put their shoulders to the wheel as he had done. Had there been any very great light among them, had there been a Pitt or a Peel, Sir Timothy would have probably become attorney-general and have made his way to the Bench;—but there had been no Pitt and no Peel, and he had seen his opening.

He had studied the ways of members. Parliamentary practice had become familiar to him. He had shown himself to be ready at all hours to fight the battle of the party he had joined. And no man knew so well as did Sir Timothy how to elevate a simple legislative attempt into a good faction fight. He had so mastered his tricks of conjuring that no one could get to the bottom of them, and had assumed a look of preternatural gravity which made many young members think that Sir Timothy was born to be a king of men.

There were no doubt some among his older supporters who felt their thraldom grievously. There were some lords in the Upper House and some sons of lords in the Lower,—with pedigrees going back far enough for pride,—who found it irksome to recognise Sir Timothy as a master. No doubt he had worked very hard and had worked for them. No doubt he knew how to do the work, and they did not. There was no other man among them to whom the lead could be conveniently transferred. But yet they were uncomfortable,—and perhaps a little ashamed.

It had arisen partly from this cause that there had been something of a counter-reaction at the last general election. When the Houses met the Ministers had indeed a majority, but a much lessened majority. The old liberal constituencies had returned to an expression of their real feeling. This reassertion of the progress of the tide, this recovery from the partial ebb which checks the violence of every flow, is common enough in politics; but at the present moment there were many who said that all this had been accelerated by a feeling in the country that Sir Timothy was hardly all that the country required as the leader of the county party.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DUKE IN HIS STUDY.

It was natural that at such a time, when success greater than had been expected had attended the efforts of the liberals, when some dozen unexpected votes had been acquired, the leading politicians of that party should have found themselves compelled to look about them and see how these good things might be utilised. In February they certainly had not expected to be called to power in the course of the existing session. Perhaps they did not expect it yet. There was still a conservative majority,—though but a small majority. But the strength of the minority consisted, not in the fact that the majority against them was small, but that it was decreasing. How quickly does the snowball grow into hugeness as it is rolled on,—but when the change comes in the weather how quickly does it melt, and before it is gone become a thing ugly, weak, and formless! Where is the individual who does not assert to himself that he would be more loyal to a falling than to a rising friend? Such is perhaps the nature of each one of us. But when any large number of men act together, the falling friend is apt to be deserted. There was a general feeling among politicians that Lord Drummond's ministry,—or Sir Timothy's—was failing, and the liberals, though they could not yet count the votes by which they might hope to be supported in power, nevertheless felt that they ought to be looking to their arms.

There had been a coalition. They who are well read in the political literature of their country will remember all about that. It had perhaps succeeded in doing that for which it had been intended. The Queen's Government had been carried on for two or three years. The Duke of Omnium had been the head of that ministry; but during those years had suffered so much as to have become utterly ashamed of the coalition,—so much as to have said often to himself that under no circumstances would he again join any ministry. At this time there was no idea of another coalition. That is a state of things which cannot come about frequently,—which can only be reproduced by men who have never hitherto felt the mean insipidity of such a condition. But they who had served on the liberal side in that coalition must again put their shoulders to the wheel. Of course it was in every man's mouth that the Duke must be induced to forget his miseries and once more to take upon himself the duties of an active servant of the State.

But they who were most anxious on the subject, such men as Lord Cantrip, Mr. Monk, our old friend Phineas Finn, and a few others, were almost afraid to approach him. At the moment when the coalition was broken up he had been very bitter in spirit, apparently almost arrogant, holding himself aloof from his late colleagues,—and since that, troubles had come to him, which had aggravated the soreness of his heart. His wife had died, and he had suffered much through his children. What Lord Silverbridge had done at Oxford was matter of general conversation, and also what he had not done.

That the heir of the family should have become a

renegade in politics was supposed greatly to have affected the father. Now Lord Gerald had been expelled from Cambridge, and Silverbridge was on the turf in conjunction with Major Tifto! Something, too, had oozed out into general ears about Lady Mary,—something which should have been kept secret as the grave. It had therefore come to pass that it was difficult even to address the Duke.

There was one man, and but one, who could do this with ease to himself;—and that man was at last put into motion at the instance of the leaders of the party. The old Duke of St. Bungay wrote the following letter to the Duke of Omnium. The letter purported to be an excuse for the writer's own defalcation. But the chief object of the writer was to induce the younger Duke once more to submit to harness.

"Longroyston, 3d June, 187—.

"Dear Duke of Omnium,—How quickly the things come round! I had thought that I should never again have been called upon even to think of the formation of another liberal ministry; and now, though it was but yesterday that we were all telling ourselves that we were thoroughly manumitted from our labours by the altered opinions of the country, sundry of our old friends are again putting their heads together.

"Did they not do so they would neglect a manifest duty. Nothing is more essential to the political well-being of the country than that the leaders on both sides in politics should be prepared for their duties. But for myself, I am bound at last to put in the old plea with a determination that it shall be respected. 'Solve senescentem.' It is now, if I calculate rightly,

exactly fifty years since I first entered public life in obedience to the advice of Lord Grey. I had then already sat five years in the House of Commons. I assisted humbly in the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, and have learned by the legislative troubles of just half a century that those whom we then invited to sit with us in Parliament have been in all things our worst enemies. But what then? Had we benefited only those who love us, would not the sinners also,—or even the tories,—have done as much as that?

"But such memories are of no avail now. I write to say that after so much of active political life, I will at last retire. My friends, when they see me inspecting a pigsty or picking a peach, are apt to remind me that I can still stand on my legs, and with more of compliment than of kindness will argue therefore that I ought still to undertake active duties in Parliament. I can select my own hours for pigs and peaches, and should I, through the dotage of age, make mistakes as to the breeding of the one or the flavour of the other, the harm done will not go far. In politics I have done my work. What you and others in the arena do will interest me more than all other things of this world, I think and hope, to my dying day. But I will not trouble the workers with the querulousness of old age.

"So much for myself. And now let me, as I go, say a parting word to him with whom in politics I have been for many years more in accord than with any other leading man. As nothing but age or infirmity would to my own mind have justified me in retiring, so do I think that you, who can plead neither age nor infirmity, will find yourself at last to want self-justifica-

tion, if you permit yourself to be driven from the task either by pride or by indifference.

"I should express my feeling better were I to say by pride and diffidence. I look to our old friendship, to the authority given to me by my age, and to the thorough goodness of your heart for pardon in thus accusing you. That little men should have ventured to ill-use you has hurt your pride. That these little men should have been able to do so has created your diffidence. Put you to a piece of work that a man may do, you have less false pride as to the way in which you may do it than any man I have known; and, let the way be open to you, as little diffidence as any. But in this political mill of ours in England, a man cannot always find the way open to do things. It does not often happen that an English statesman can go in and make a great score off his own bat. But not the less is he bound to play the game and to go to the wicket when he finds that his time has come.

"There are, I think, two things for you to consider in this matter, and two only. The first is your capacity, and the other is your duty. A man may have found by experience that he is unfitted for public life. You and I have known men in regard to whom we have thoroughly wished that such experience had been reached. But this is a matter in which a man who doubts himself is bound to take the evidence of those around him. The whole party is most anxious for your co-operation. If this be so,—and I make you the assurance from most conclusive evidence,—you are bound to accept the common consent of your political friends on that matter. You perhaps think that at a certain

period of your life you failed. They all agree with me that you did not fail. It is a matter on which you should be bound by our opinion rather than by your own.

"As to that matter of duty I shall have less difficulty in carrying you with me. Though this renewed task may be personally disagreeable to you, even though your tastes should lead you to some other life,—which I think is not the case,—still, if your country wants you, you should serve your country. It is a work as to which such a one as you has no option. Of most of those who choose public life,—it may be said that were they not there, there would be others as serviceable. But when a man such as you has shown himself to be necessary, as long as health and age permit, he cannot recede without breach of manifest duty. The work to be done is so important, the numbers to be benefited are so great, that he cannot be justified in even remembering that he has a self.

"As I have said before, I trust that my own age and your goodness will induce you to pardon this great interference. But whether pardoned or not I shall always be

"Your most affectionate friend,

"St. Bungay."

The Duke,—our Duke,—on reading this letter was by no means pleased by its contents. He could ill bear to be reminded either of his pride or of his diffidence. And yet the accusations which others made against him were as nothing to those with which he charged himself. He would do this till at last he was forced to defend himself against himself by asking him-

self whether he could be other than as God had made him. It is the last and the poorest makeshift of a defence to which a man can be brought in his own court! Was it his fault that he was so thin-skinned that all things hurt him? When some coarse man said to him that which ought not to have been said, was it his fault that at every word a penknife had stabbed him? Other men had borne these buffets without shrinking, and had shown themselves thereby to be more useful, much more efficacious; but he could no more imitate them than he could procure for himself the skin of a rhinoceros or the tusk of an elephant. And this shrinking was what men called pride,—was the pride of which his old friend wrote! "Have I ever been haughty, unless in my own defence?" he asked himself, remembering certain passages of humility in his life, —and certain passages of haughtiness also.

And the Duke told him also that he was diffident. Of course he was diffident. Was it not one and the same thing? The very pride of which he was accused was no more than that shrinking which comes from the want of trust in one's self. He was a shy man. All his friends and all his enemies knew that;—it was thus that he still discoursed with himself;—a shy, self-conscious, timid, shrinking, thin-skinned man! Of course he was diffident. Then why urge him on to tasks for which he was by nature unfitted?

And yet there was much in his old friend's letter which moved him. There were certain words which he kept on repeating to himself. "He cannot be justified in even remembering that he has a self." It was a hard thing to say of any man, but yet a true thing of such a man as his correspondent had described.

His correspondent had spoken of a man who should know himself to be capable of serving the State. If a man were capable, and was sure within his own bosom of his own capacity, it would be his duty. But what if he were not so satisfied? What if he felt that any labours of his would be vain, and all self-abnegation useless? His friend had told him that on that matter he was bound to take the opinion of others. Perhaps so. But if so, had not that opinion been given to him very plainly when he was told that he was both proud and diffident? That he was called upon to serve his country by good service, if such were within his power, he did acknowledge freely; but not that he should allow himself to be stuck up as a ninepin only to be knocked down! There are politicians for whom such occupation seems to be proper;—and who like it, too. A little office, a little power, a little rank, a little pay, a little niche in the ephemeral history of the year will reward many men adequately for being knocked down.

And yet he loved power, and even when thinking of all this allowed his mind from time to time to run away into a dreamland of prosperous political labours. He thought what it would be to be an all-beneficent Prime Minister, with a loyal majority, with a well-conditioned unanimous Cabinet, with a grateful people, and an appreciative sovereign. How well might a man spend himself night and day, even to death, in the midst of labours such as these.

Half an hour after receiving the Duke's letter he suddenly jumped up and sat himself down at his desk. He felt it to be necessary that he should at once write to his old friend;—and the more necessary that he should do so at once, because he had resolved that he

would do so before he had made up his mind on the chief subject of that letter. It did not suit him to say either that he would or that he would not do as his friend advised him. The reply was made in a very few words. "As to myself," he said, after expressing his regret that the Duke should find it necessary to retire from public life—"as to myself, pray understand that whatever I may do I shall never cease to be grateful for your affectionate and high-spirited counsels."

Then his mind recurred to a more immediate and, for the moment, a heavier trouble. He had as yet given no answer to that letter from Mrs. Finn, which the reader will perhaps remember. It might indeed be passed over without an answer; but to him that was impossible. She had accused him in the very strongest language of injustice, and had made him understand that if he were unjust to her, then would he be most ungrateful. He, looking at the matter with his own lights, had thought that he had been right, but had resolved to submit the question to another person. As judge in the matter he had chosen Lady Cantrip, and Lady Cantrip had given judgment against him.

He had pressed Lady Cantrip for a decided opinion, and she had told him that she, in the same position, would have done just as Mrs. Finn had done. He had constituted Lady Cantrip his judge and had resolved that her judgment should be final. He declared to himself that he did not understand it. If a man's house be on fire, do you think of certain rules of etiquette before you bid him send for the engines? If a wild beast be loose, do you go through some ceremony before you caution the wanderers abroad? There should not have been a moment! But, nevertheless,

it was now necessary that he should conform himself to the opinion of Lady Cantrip, and in doing so he must apologise for the bitter scorn with which he had allowed himself to treat his wife's most loyal and loving friend.

The few words to the Duke had not been difficult, but this letter seemed to be an Herculean task. It was made infinitely more difficult by the fact that Lady Cantrip had not seemed to think that this marriage was impossible. "Young people when they have set their minds upon it do so generally prevail at last!" These had been her words, and they discomfited him greatly. She had thought the marriage to be possible. Had she not almost expressed an opinion that they ought to be allowed to marry? And if so, would it not be his duty to take his girl away from Lady Cantrip? As to the idea that young people, because they have declared themselves to be in love, were to have just what they wanted,—with that he did not agree at all. Lady Cantrip had told him that young people generally did prevail at last. He knew the story of one young person, whose position in her youth had been very much the same as that of his daughter now, and she had not prevailed. And in her case had not the opposition which had been made to her wishes been most fortunate? That young person had become his wife, his Glencora, his Duchess. Had she been allowed to have her own way when she was a child, what would have been her fate? Ah, what! Then he had to think of it all. Might she not have been alive now, and perhaps happier than she had ever been with him? And had he remained always unmarried, devoted simply to politics, would not the troubles of

the world have been lighter on him? But what had that to do with it? In these matters it was not the happiness of this or that individual which should be considered. There is a propriety in things;—and only by an adherence to that propriety on the part of individuals can the general welfare be maintained. A king in this country, or the heir or the possible heir to the throne, is debarred from what might possibly be a happy marriage by regard to the good of his subjects. To the Duke's thinking the maintenance of the aristocracy of the country was second only in importance to the maintenance of the Crown. How should the aristocracy be maintained if its wealth were allowed to fall into the hands of an adventurer!

Such were the opinions with regard to his own order of one who was as truly liberal in his ideas as any man in England, and who had argued out these ideas to their consequences. As by the spread of education and increase of general well-being every proletaire was brought nearer to a duke, so by such action would the duke be brought nearer to the proletaire. Such drawing nearer of the classes was the object to which all this man's political action tended. And yet it was a dreadful thing to him that his own daughter should desire to marry a man so much beneath her own rank and fortune as Frank Tregear.

He would not allow himself to believe that the young people could ever prevail; but nevertheless, as the idea of the thing had not alarmed Lady Cantrip as it had him, it was necessary that he should make some apology to Mrs. Finn. Each moment of procrastination was a prick to his conscience. He now therefore dragged out from the secrecy of some close drawer Mrs. Finn's

letter and read it through to himself once again. Yes —it was true that he had condemned her, and that he had punished her. Though he had done nothing to her, and said nothing, and written but very little, still he had punished her most severely.

She had written as though the matter was almost one of life and death to her. He could understand that too. His uncle's conduct to this woman, and his wife's, had created the intimacy which had existed. Through their efforts she had become almost as one of the family. And now to be dismissed, like a servant who had misbehaved herself! And then her arguments in her own defence were all so good,—if only that which Lady Cantrip had laid down as law was to be held as law. He was aware now that she had had no knowledge of the matter till his daughter had told her of the engagement at Matching. Then it was evident also that she had sent this Tregear to him immediately on her return to London. And at the end of the letter she accused him of what she had been pleased to call his usual tenacity in believing ill of her! He had been obstinate,—too obstinate in this respect; but he did not love her the better for having told him of it.

At last he did put his apology into words.

"My dear Mrs. Finn,—I believe I had better acknowledge to you at once that I have been wrong in my judgment as to your conduct in a certain matter. You tell me that I owe it to you to make this acknowledgment,—and I make it. The subject itself is, as you may imagine, so painful that I will spare myself, if possible, any further allusion to it. I believe I

did you a wrong, and therefore I write to ask your pardon.

"I should perhaps apologise also for delay in my reply. I have had much to think of in this matter, and have many others also on my mind.

"Believe me to be,

"Yours faithfully,

"OMNIUM."

It was very short, and as being short was infinitely less troublesome at the moment than a fuller epistle; but he was angry with himself, knowing that it was too short, feeling that it was ungracious. He should have expressed a hope that he might soon see her again,—only he had no such wish. There had been times at which he had liked her, but he knew that he did not like her now. And yet he was bound to be her friend! If he could only do some great thing for her, and thus satisfy his feeling of indebtedness towards her! But all the favours had been from her to him and his.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FRANK TREGEAR WANTS A FRIEND.

Six or seven weeks had passed since Tregear had made his communication to the Duke, and during that time he had heard not a word about the girl he loved. He knew, indeed, that she was at The Horns, and probably had reason to suppose that she was being guarded there, as it were, out of his reach. This did not surprise him; nor did he regard it as a hardship. It was to be expected that she should be kept out of his sight. But this was a state of things to which, as he thought, there should not be more than a moderate amount of submission. Six weeks was not a very long period, but it was perhaps long enough for evincing that respect which he owed to the young lady's father. Something must be done some day. How could he expect her to be true to him unless he took some means of showing himself to be true to her?

In these days he did not live very much with her brother. He not only disliked, but distrusted Major Tifto, and had so expressed himself as to give rise to angry words. Silverbridge had said that he knew how to take care of himself. Tregear had replied that he had his doubts on that matter. Then the member of Parliament had declared that at any rate he did not intend to be taken care of by Frank Tregear! In such a state of things it was not possible that there should be any close confidence as to Lady Mary. Nor does

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it often come to pass that the brother is the confidant of the sister's lover. Brothers hardly like their sisters to have lovers, though they are often well satisfied that their sisters should find husbands. Tregear's want of rank and wealth added something to this feeling in the mind of this brother; so that Silverbridge, though he felt himself to be deterred by friendship from any open opposition, still was almost inimical. "It won't do, you know," he had said to his brother Gerald, shaking his head.

Tregear, however, was determined to be active in the matter, to make some effort, to speak to somebody. But how to make an effort,—and to whom should he speak? Thinking of all this he remembered that Mrs. Finn had sent for him and had told him to go with his love-story to the Duke. She had been almost severe with him;—but after the interview was over, he had felt that she had acted well and wisely. He therefore determined that he would go to Mrs. Finn.

She had as yet received no answer from the Duke, though nearly a fortnight had elapsed since she had written her letter. During that time she had become very angry. She felt that he was not treating her as a gentleman should treat a lady, and certainly not as the husband of her late friend should have treated the friend of his late wife. She had a proud consciousness of having behaved well to the Pallisers, and now this head of the Pallisers was rewarding her by evil treatment. She had been generous;—he was ungenerous. She had been honest;—he was deficient even in that honesty for which she had given him credit. And she had been unable to obtain any of that consolation which could have come to her from talking of her wrongs.

She could not complain to her husband, because there were reasons which made it essential that her husband should not quarrel with the Duke. She was hot with indignation at the very moment in which Tregear was announced.

He began by apologising for his intrusion, and she of course assured him that he was welcome. "After the liberty which I took with you, Mr. Tregear, I am only too well pleased that you should come and see me."

"I am afraid," he said, "that I was a little rough."

"A little warm;—but that was to be expected. A gentleman never likes to be interfered with on such a matter."

"The position was and is difficult, Mrs. Finn."

"And I am bound to acknowledge the very ready way in which you did what I asked you to do."

"And now, Mrs. Finn, what is to come next?"

"Ah!"

"Something must be done! You know of course that the Duke did not receive me with any great favour."

"I did not suppose he would."

"Nor did I. Of course he would object to such a marriage. But a man in these days cannot dictate to his daughter what husband she should marry."

"Perhaps he can dictate to her what husband she shall not marry."

"Hardly that. He may put impediments in the way; and the Duke will do so. But if I am happy enough to have won the affections of his daughter,—so as to make it essential to her happiness that she should become my wife,—he will give way."

"What am I to say, Mr. Tregear?"

"Just what you think."

"Why should I be made to say what I think on so delicate a matter? Or of what use would be my thoughts? Remember how far I am removed from her."

"You are his friend."

"Not at all! No one less so!" As she said this she could not hinder the colour from coming into her face. "I was her friend,—Lady Glencora's; but with the death of my friend there was an end of all that."

"You were staying with him,—at his request. You told me so yourself."

"I shall never stay with him again. But all that, Mr. Tregear, is of no matter. I do not mean to say a word against him;—not a word. But if you wish to interest any one as being the Duke's friend, then I can assure you I am the last person in London to whom you should come. I know no one to whom the Duke is likely to entertain feelings so little kind as towards me." This she said in a peculiarly solemn way which startled Tregear. But before he could answer her a servant entered the room with a letter. She recognised at once the Duke's handwriting. Here was the answer for which she had been so long waiting in silent expectation! She could not keep it unread till he was gone. "Will you allow me a moment," she whispered, and then she opened the envelope. As she read the few words her eyes became laden with tears. They quite sufficed to relieve the injured pride which had sat so heavy at her heart. "I believe I did you a wrong, and therefore I ask your pardon!" It was so like what she had believed the man to be! She could not be longer angry with him. And yet the very last

words she had spoken were words complaining of his conduct. "This is from the Duke," she said, putting the letter back into its envelope.

"Oh, indeed."

"It is odd that it should have come while you were here."

"Is it,—is it,—about Lady Mary?"

"No;—at least,—not directly. I perhaps spoke more harshly about him than I should have done. The truth is I had expected a line from him, and it had not come. Now it is here; but I do not suppose I shall ever see much of him. My intimacy was with her. But I would not wish you to remember what I said just now, if—if——"

"If what, Mrs. Finn? You mean, perhaps, if I should ever be allowed to call myself his son-in-law. It may seem to you to be arrogant, but it is an honour which I expect to win."

"Faint heart, you know, Mr. Tregear."

"Exactly. One has to tell one's self that very often. You will help me?"

"Certainly not," she said, as though she were much startled. "How can I help you?"

"By telling me what I should do. I suppose if I were to go down to Richmond I should not be admitted."

"If you ask me, I think not;—not to see Lady Mary. Lady Cantrip would perhaps see you."

"She is acting the part of—duenna."

"As I should do also, if Lady Mary were staying with me. You don't suppose that if she were here I would let her see you in my house without her father's leave?"

"I suppose not."

"Certainly not;—and therefore I conceive that Lady Cantrip will not do so either."

"I wish she were here."

"It would be of no use. I should be a dragon in guarding her."

"I wish you would let me feel that you were like a sister to me in this matter."

"But I am not your sister, nor yet your aunt, nor yet your grandmother. What I mean is that I cannot be on your side."

"Can you not?"

"No, Mr. Tregear. Think how long I have known these other people."

"But just now you said that he was your enemy."

"I did say so; but as I have unsaid it since, you as a gentleman will not remember my words. At any rate I cannot help you in this."

"I shall write to her."

"It can be nothing to me. If you write she will show your letter either to her father or to Lady Cantrip."

"But she will read it first."

"I cannot tell how that may be. In fact, I am the very last person in the world to whom you should come for assistance in this matter. If I gave any assistance to anybody I should be bound to give it to the Duke."

"I cannot understand that, Mrs. Finn."

"Nor can I explain it, but it would be so. I shall always be very glad to see you, and I do feel that we ought to be friends,—because I took such a liberty with you. But in this matter I cannot help you."

When she said this he had to take his leave. It was impossible that he should further press his case upon her, though he would have been very glad to extract from her some kindly word. It is such a help in a difficulty to have somebody who will express even a hope that the difficulty is perhaps not invincible! He had no one to comfort him in this matter. There was one dear friend,—as a friend dearer than any other,—to whom he might go, and who would after some fashion bid him prosper. Mabel would encourage him. She had said that she would do so. But in making that promise she had told him that Romeo would not have spoken of his love for Juliet to Rosalind, whom he had loved before he saw Juliet. No doubt she had gone on to tell him that he might come to her and talk freely of his love for Lady Mary,—but after what had been said before he felt that he could not do so without leaving a sting behind. When a man's love goes well with him,—so well as to be in some degree oppressive to him even by its prosperity,—when the young lady has jumped into his arms, and the father and the mother have been quite willing, then he wants no confidant. He does not care to speak very much of the matter which among his friends is apt to become a subject for raillery. When you call a man Benedict he does not come to you with ecstatic descriptions of the beauty and the wit of his Beatrice. But no one was likely to call him Benedict in reference to Lady Mary.

In spite of his manner, in spite of his apparent self-sufficiency, this man was very soft within. Less than two years back he had been willing to sacrifice all the world for his cousin Mabel, and his cousin Mabel had

told him that he was wrong. "It does not pay to sacrifice the world for love." So cousin Mabel had said, and had added something as to its being necessary that she should marry a rich man, and expedient that he should marry a rich woman. He had thought much about it, and had declared to himself that on no account would he marry a woman for her money. Then he had encountered Lady Mary Palliser. There had been no doubt, no resolution after that, no thinking about it;—but downright love. There was nothing left of real regret for his cousin in his bosom. She had been right. That love had been impossible. But this would be possible,—ah, so deliciously possible,—if only her father and mother would assist! The mother, imprudent in this as in all things, had assented. The reader knows the rest.

It was in every way possible. "She will have money enough," the Duchess had said, "if only her father can be brought to give it you." So Tregear had set his heart upon it, and had said to himself that the thing was to be done. Then his friend the Duchess had died, and the real difficulties had commenced. From that day he had not seen his love, or heard from her. How was he to know whether she would be true to him? And where was he to seek for that sympathy which he felt to be so necessary to him? A wild idea had come into his head that Mrs. Finn would be his friend;—but she had repudiated him.

He went straight home and at once wrote to the girl. The letter was a simple love-letter, and as such need not be given here. In what sweetest language he could find he assured her that even though he should never be allowed to see her or to hear from

her, that still he should cling to her. And then he added this passage: "If your love for me be what I think it to be, no one can have a right to keep us apart. Pray be sure that I shall not change. If you change let me know it;—but I shall as soon expect the heavens to fall."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"SHE MUST BE MADE TO OBEY."

Lady Mary Palliser down at The Horns had as much liberty allowed to her as is usually given to young ladies in these very free days. There was indeed no restriction placed upon her at all. Had Tregear gone down to Richmond and asked for the young lady, and had Lady Cantrip at the time been out and the young lady at home, it would have depended altogether upon the young lady whether she would have seen her lover or not. Nevertheless Lady Cantrip kept her eyes open, and when the letter came from Tregear she was aware that the letter had come. But the letter found its way into Lady Mary's hands, and was read in the seclusion of her own bedroom. "I wonder whether you would mind reading that," she said very shortly afterwards to Lady Cantrip. "What answer ought I to make?"

"Do you think any answer ought to be made, my dear?"

"Oh yes; I must answer him."

"Would your papa wish it?"

"I told papa that I would not promise not to write to him. I think I told him that he should see any letters that there were. But if I show them to you, I suppose that will do as well."

"You had better keep your word to him absolutely."

"I am not afraid of doing so, if you mean that. I cannot bear to give him pain, but this is a matter in which I mean to have my own way."

"Mean to have your own way!" said Lady Cantrip, much surprised by the determined tone of the young lady.

"Certainly I do. I want you to understand so much! I suppose papa can keep us from marrying forever and ever if he pleases, but he never will make me say that I will give up Mr. Tregear. And if he does not yield I shall think him cruel. Why should he wish to make me unhappy all my life?"

"He certainly does not wish that, my dear."

"But he will do it."

"I cannot go against your father, Mary."

"No, I suppose not. I shall write to Mr. Tregear, and then I will show you what I have written. Papa shall see it too if he pleases. I will do nothing secret, but I will never give up Mr. Tregear."

Lord Cantrip came down to Richmond that evening, and his wife told him that in her opinion it would be best that the Duke should allow the young people to marry, and should give them money enough to live upon. "Is not that a strong order?" asked the Earl. The Countess acknowledged that it was a "strong order," but suggested that for the happiness of them all it might as well be done at first as at last.

The next morning Lady Mary showed her a copy of the reply which she had already sent to her lover.

"Dear Frank,—You may be *quite sure* that I shall *never* give you up. I will not write more at present because papa does not wish me to do so. I shall show papa your letter and my answer.

"Your own most affectionate

"MARY."

"Has it gone?" asked the Countess.

"I put it myself into the pillar letter-box." Then Lady Cantrip felt that she had to deal with a very self-willed young lady indeed.

That afternoon Lady Cantrip asked Lady Mary whether she might be allowed to take the two letters up to town with the express purpose of showing them to the Duke. "Oh yes," said Mary. "I think it would be so much the best. Give papa my kindest love, and tell him from me that if he wants to make his poor little girl happy he will forgive her and be kind to her in all this." Then the Countess made some attempt to argue the matter. There were proprieties! High rank might be a blessing or might be the reverse—as people thought of it;—but all men acknowledged that much was due to it. "Noblesse oblige." It was often the case in life that women were called upon by circumstances to sacrifice their inclinations! What right had a gentleman to talk of marriage who had no means? These things she said and very many more, but it was to no purpose. The young lady asserted that as the gentleman was a gentleman there need be no question as to rank, and that in regard to money there need be no difficulty if one of them had sufficient. "But you have none but what your father may give you," said Lady Cantrip. "Papa can give it us without any trouble," said Lady Mary. This child had a clear idea of what she thought to be her own rights. Being the child of rich parents she had the right to money. Being a woman she had a right to a husband. Having been born free she had a right to choose one for herself. Having had a man's love given to her she had a right to keep it. "One

does n't know which she is most like, her father or her mother," Lady Cantrip said afterwards to her husband. "She has his cool determination, and her hot-headed obstinacy.

She did show the letters to the Duke, and in answer to a word or two from him explained that she could not take upon herself to debar her guest from the use of the post. "But she will write nothing without letting you know it."

"She ought to write nothing at all."

"What she feels is much worse than what she writes."

"If there were no intercourse she would forget him."

"Ah; I don't know," said the Countess sorrowfully. "I thought so once."

"All children are determined as long as they are allowed to have their own way."

"I mean to say that it is the nature of her character to be obstinate. Most girls are prone to yield. They have not character enough to stand against opposition. I am not speaking now only of affairs like this. It would be the same with her in anything. Have you not always found it so?"

Then he had to acknowledge to himself that he had never found out anything in reference to his daughter's character. She had been properly educated;—at least he hoped so. He had seen her grow up, pretty, sweet, affectionate, always obedient to him;—the most charming plaything in the world on the few occasions in which he had allowed himself to play. But as to her actual disposition, he had never taken any trouble to inform himself. She had been left to her mother,—as other girls are left. And his sons had been left

to their tutors. And now he had no control over any of them. "She must be made to obey like others," he said at last, speaking through his teeth.

There was something in this which almost frightened Lady Cantrip. She could not bear to hear him say that the girl must be made to yield with that spirit of despotic power under which women were restrained in years now passed. If she could have spoken her own mind it would have been to this effect: "Let us do what we can to lead her away from this desire of hers; and in order that we may do so, let us tell her that her marriage with Mr. Tregear is out of the question. But if we do not succeed,—say in the course of the next twelve months,—let us give way. Let us make it a matter of joy that the young man himself is so acceptable and well-behaved." That was her idea, and with that she would have indoctrinated the Duke had she been able. But his was different. "She must be made to obey," he said. And, as he said it, he seemed to be indifferent as to the sorrow which such enforced obedience might bring upon his child. In answer to this she could only shake her head. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Do you think we ought to yield?"

"Not at once, certainly."

"But at last?"

"What can you do, Duke? If she be as firm as you, can you bear to see her pine away in her misery?"

"Girls do not do like that," he said.

"Girls, like men, are very different. They generally will yield to external influences. English girls, though they become the most loving wives in the world, do not generally become so riven by an attachment as to become deep sufferers when it is disallowed. But here,

I fear, we have to deal with one who will suffer after this fashion."

"Why should she not be like others?"

"It may be so. We will try. But you see what she says in her letter to him. She writes as though your authority were to be nothing in that matter of giving up. In all that she says to me there is the same spirit. If she is firm, Duke, you must yield."

"Never! She shall never marry him with my sanction."

There was nothing more to be said, and Lady Cantrip went her way. But the Duke, though he could say nothing more, continued to think of it hour after hour. He went down to the House of Lords to listen to a debate in which it was intended to cover the Ministers with heavy disgrace. But the Duke could not listen even to his own friends. He could listen to nothing as he thought of the condition of his children.

He had been asked whether he could bear to see his girl suffer, as though he were indifferent to the sufferings of his child. Did he not know of himself that there was no father who would do more for the welfare of his daughter? Was he not sure of the tenderness of his own heart? In all that he was doing was he governed by anything but a sense of duty? Was it personal pride or love of personal aggrandisement? He thought that he could assure himself that he was open to no such charge. Would he not die for her,—or for them,—if he could so serve them? Surely this woman had accused him most wrongfully when she had intimated that he could see his girl suffer without caring for it. In his indignation he determined,—for a while,—that he would remove her from the custody

of Lady Cantrip. But then, where should he place her? He was aware that his own house would be like a grave to a girl just fit to come out into the world. In this coming autumn she must go somewhere,—with some one. He himself, in his present frame of mind, would be but a sorry travelling companion.

Lady Cantrip had said that the best hope of escape would lie in the prospect of another lover. The prescription was disagreeable, but it had availed in the case of his own wife. Before he had ever seen her as Lady Glencora M'Cluskie she had been desirous of giving herself and all her wealth to one Burgo Fitzgerald, who had been altogether unworthy. The Duke could remember well how a certain old Lady Midlothian had first hinted to him that Lady Glencora's property was very large, and had then added that the young lady herself was very beautiful. And he could remember how his uncle, the late Duke, who had seldom taken much trouble in merely human affairs, had said a word or two—"I have heard a whisper about you and Lady Glencora M'Cluskie, nothing could be better." The result had been undoubtedly good. His Cora and all her money had been saved from a worthless spendthrift. He had found a wife who he now thought had made him happy. And she had found at any rate a respectable husband. The idea when picked to pieces is not a nice idea. "Let us look out for a husband for this girl, so that we may get her married,—out of the way of her lover." It is not nice. But it had succeeded in one case, and why should it not succeed in another?

But how was it to be done? Who should do it? Whom should he select to play the part which he had undertaken in that other arrangement? No worse

person could be found than himself for managing such an affair. When the idea had first been raised he had thought that Lady Cantrip would do it all; but now he was angry with Lady Cantrip.

How was it to be done? How should it be commenced? How had it been commenced in his own case? He did not in the least know how he had been chosen. Was it possible that his uncle, who was the proudest man in England, should have condescended to make a bargain with an old dowager whom everybody had despised? And in what way had he been selected? No doubt he had been known to be the heir-apparent to a dukedom and to ducal revenues. In his case old Lady Midlothian had begun the matter with him. It occurred to him that in royal marriages such beginnings are quite common.

But who should be the happy man? Then he began to count up the requisite attributes. He must be of high rank, and an eldest son, and the possessor of, or the heir to, a good estate. He did despise himself when he found that he put these things first,—as a matter of course. Nevertheless he did put them first. He was ejecting this other man because he possessed none of these attributes. He hurried himself on to add that the man must be of good character, and such as a young girl might learn to love. But yet he was aware that he added these things for his conscience' sake. Tregear's character was good, and certainly the girl loved him. But was it not clear to all who knew anything of such matters that Mr. Francis Tregear should not have dared even to think of marrying the daughter of the Duke of Omnium?

Who should be the happy man? There were so many who evidently were unfit. Young Lord Percival

was heir to a ruined estate and a beggared peerage. Lord Glasslough was odious to all men. There were three or four others of whom he thought that he knew some fatal objection. But when he remembered Lord Popplecourt there seemed to be no objection which need be fatal.

Lord Popplecourt was a young peer whose father had died two years since and whose estates were large and unembarrassed. The late lord, who had been a whig of the old fashion, had been the Duke's friend. They had been at Oxford and in the House of Commons together, and Lord Popplecourt had always been staunch to his party. As to the son, the Duke remembered to have heard lately that he was not given to waste his money. He drove a coach about London a good deal, but had not as yet done anything very foolish. He had taken his degree at Oxford, thereby showing himself to be better than Silverbridge. He had also taken his seat in the House of Lords and had once opened his mouth. He had not indeed appeared often again; but at Lord Popplecourt's age much legislation is not to be expected from a young peer. Then he thought of the man's appearance. Popplecourt was not specially attractive, whereas Tregear was a very handsome man. But so also had been Burgo Fitzgerald,—almost abnormally beautiful, while he, Plantagenet Palliser, as he was then, had been quite as insignificant in appearance as Lord Popplecourt.

Lord Popplecourt might possibly do. But then how should the matter be spoken of to the young man? After all, would it not be best that he should trust Lady Cantrip?

CHAPTER XXV.

A FAMILY BREAKFAST-TABLE.

Lord Silverbridge had paid all his Derby losses without any difficulty. They had not been very heavy for a man in his position, and the money had come without remonstrance. When asking for it he was half ashamed of himself, but could still find consolation by remembering how much worse had befallen many young men whom he knew. He had never "plunged." In fact he had made the most prudent book in the world; and had so managed affairs that even now the horse which had been beaten was worth more than all he had lost and paid. "This is getting serious," he had said to his partner when, on making out a rough account, he had brought the Major in a debtor to him of more than a thousand pounds. The Major had remarked that as he was half-owner of the horses his partner had good security for the money. Then something of an unwritten arrangement was made. The "Prime Minister" was now one of the favourites for the Leger. If the horse won that race there would be money enough for everything. If that race were lost, then there should be a settlement by the transfer of the stud to the younger partner. "He 's safe to pull it off," said the Major.

At this time both his sons were living with the Duke in London. It had been found impracticable to send Lord Gerald back to Cambridge. The doors of Trin-

ity were closed against him. But some interest had been made in his favor, and he was to be transferred to Oxford. All the truth had been told, and there had been a feeling that the lad should be allowed another chance. He could not, however, go to his new Alma Mater till after the long vacation. In the meantime he was to be taken by a tutor down to a cottage on Dartmoor and there be made to read,—with such amusement in the meantime as might be got from fishing, and playing cricket with the West Devon county club. "It is n't a very bright look-out for the summer," his brother had said to him, "but it 's better than breaking out on the loose altogether. You be a credit to the family and all that sort of thing. Then I 'll give up the borough to you. But mind you stick to the liberals. I 've made an ass of myself." However, in these early days of June Lord Gerald had not yet got his tutor.

Though the father and the two young men were living together they did not see very much of each other. The Duke breakfasted at nine, and the repast was a very simple one. When they failed to appear, he did not scold,—but would simply be disappointed. At dinner they never met. It was supposed that Lord Gerald passed his mornings in reading, and some little attempts were made in that direction. It is to be feared they did not come to much. Silverbridge was very kind to Gerald, feeling an increased tenderness for him on account of that Cambridge mishap. Now they were much together, and occasionally, by a strong effort, would grace their father's breakfast-table with their company.

It was not often that he either reproached them or

preached to them. Though he could not live with them on almost equal terms, as some fathers can live with their sons, though he could not laugh at their fun or make them laugh at his wit, he knew that it would have been better both for him and them if he had possessed this capacity. Though the life which they lived was distasteful to him,—though race-horses were an abomination to him, and the driving of coaches a folly, and club-life a manifest waste of time, still he recognised these things as being, if not necessary, yet unavoidable evils. To Gerald he would talk about Oxford, avoiding all allusions to past Cambridge misfortunes; but in the presence of Silverbridge, whose Oxford career had been so peculiarly unfortunate, he would make no allusion to either of the universities. To his eldest son he would talk of Parliament, which of all subjects would have been the most congenial had they agreed in politics. As it was he could speak more freely to him on that than any other matter.

One Thursday night as the two brothers went to bed on returning from the Beargarden, at a not very late hour, they agreed that they would "give the governor a turn" the next morning,—by which they meant that they would drag themselves out of bed in time to breakfast with him. "The worst of it is that he never will let them get anything to eat," said Gerald. But Silverbridge explained that he had taken that matter into his own hands, and had specially ordered broiled salmon and stewed kidneys. "He won't like it, you know," said Gerald. "I 'm sure he thinks it wicked to eat anything but toasted bacon before lunch."

At a very little after nine Silverbridge was in the breakfast-room, and there found his father. "I sup-

pose Gerald is not up yet," said the Duke, almost crossly.

"Oh yes he is, sir. He 'll be here directly."

"Have you seen him this morning?"

"No; I have n't seen him. But I know he 'll be here. He said he would, last night."

"You speak of it as if it were an undertaking."

"No, not that, sir. But we are not always quite up to time."

"No;—indeed you are not. Perhaps you sit late at the House."

"Sometimes I do," said the young member, with a feeling almost akin to shame as he remembered all the hours spent at the Beargarden. "I have had Gerald there in the gallery sometimes. It is just as well he should know what is being done."

"Quite as well."

"I should n't wonder if he gets a seat some day."

"I don't know how that may be."

"He won't change as I have done. He 'll stick to your side. Indeed I think he 'd do better in the House than I shall. He has more gift of the gab."

"That is not the first thing requisite."

"I know all that, sir. I 've read your letter more than once, and I showed it to him."

There was something sweet and pleasant in the young man's manner by which the father could hardly not be captivated. They had now sat down, and the servant had brought in the unusual accessories for a morning feast. "What is all that?" asked the Duke.

"Gerald and I are so awfully hungry of a morning," said the son, apologising.

"Well;—it 's a very good thing to be hungry:—that

is if you can get plenty to eat. Salmon is it? I don't think I 'll have any myself. Kidneys! Not for me. I think I 'll take a bit of fried bacon. I also am hungry, but not awfully hungry."

"You never seem to me to eat anything, sir."

"Eating is an occupation from which I think a man takes the more pleasure the less he considers it. A rural labourer who sits on the ditch-side with his bread and cheese and an onion has more enjoyment out of it than any Lucullus."

"But he likes a good deal of it."

"I do not think he ever overeats himself,—which Lucullus does. I have envied a ploughman his power,—his dura ilia,—but never an epicure the appreciative skill of his palate. If Gerald does not make haste he will have to exercise neither the one nor the other upon that fish."

"I will leave a bit for him, sir,—and here he is. You are twenty minutes late, Gerald. My father says that bread and cheese and onions would be better for you than salmon and stewed kidneys."

"No, Silverbridge;—I said no such thing; but that if he were a hedger and ditcher the bread and cheese and onions would be as good."

"I should not mind trying them at all," said Gerald. "Only one never does have such things for breakfast. Last winter a lot of us skated to Ely, and we ate two or three loaves of bread and a whole cheese at a pot-house! And as for beer, we drank the public dry."

"It was because for the time you had been a hedger and ditcher."

"Proby was a ditcher I know, when he went right through into one of the dykes. Just push on that dish,

Silverbridge. It 's no good you having the trouble of helping me half-a-dozen times. I don't think things are a bit the nicer because they cost a lot of money. I suppose that is what you mean, sir."

"Something of that kind, Gerald. Not to have money for your wants;—that must be troublesome."

"Very bad indeed," said Silverbridge, shaking his head wisely, as a member of Parliament might do who felt that something should be done to put down such a lamentable state of things.

"I don't complain," said Gerald. "No fellow ever had less right to complain. But I never felt that I had quite enough. Of course it was my own fault."

"I should say so, my boy. But then there are a great many like you. Let their means be what they may they never have quite enough. To be in any difficulty with regard to money,—to owe what you cannot pay, or even to have to abstain from things which you have told yourself are necessary to yourself or to those who depend on you,—creates a feeling of meanness."

"That is what I have always felt," said Silverbridge. "I cannot bear to think that I should like to have a thing and that I cannot afford it."

"You do not quite understand me, I fear. The only case in which you can be justified in desiring that which you cannot afford is when the thing is necessary; —as bread may be, or clothes."

"As when a fellow wants a lot of new breeches before he has paid his tailor's bill."

"As when a poor man," said the Duke impressively, "may long to give his wife a new gown, or his children boots to keep their feet from the mud and snow." Then

he paused a moment, but the serious tone of his voice and the energy of his words had sent Gerald headlong among his kidneys. "I say that in such cases money must be regarded as a blessing."

"A ten-pound note will do so much," said Silverbridge.

"But beyond that it ought to have no power of conferring happiness, and certainly cannot drive away sorrow. Not though you build palaces out into the deep, can that help you. You read your Horace I hope. 'Scandunt eodum quo dominus minæ.'"

"I recollect that," said Gerald. "Black care sits behind the horseman."

"Even though he have a groom riding after him beautiful with exquisite boots. As far as I have been able to look out into the world——"

"I suppose you know it as well as anybody," said Silverbridge,—who was simply desirous of making himself pleasant to the "dear old governor."

"As far as my experience goes, the happiest man is he who, being above the troubles which money brings, has his hands the fullest of work. If I were to name the class of men whose lives are spent with the most thorough enjoyment, I think I should name that of barristers who are in large practice and also in Parliament."

"Is n't it a great grind, sir?" asked Silverbridge.

"A very great grind, as you call it. And there may be the grind and not the success. But——" He had now got up from his seat at the table and was standing with his back against the chimney-piece, and as he went on with his lecture,—as the word "But" came from his lips—he struck the fingers of one hand lightly on

the palm of the other as he had been known to do at some happy flight of oratory in the House of Commons. "But it is the grind that makes the happiness. To feel that your hours are filled to overflowing, that you can barely steal minutes enough for sleep, that the welfare of many is entrusted to you, that the world looks on and approves, that some good is always being done to others,—above all things some good to your country;—that is happiness. For myself I can conceive none other."

"Books," suggested Gerald, as he put the last morsel of the last kidney into his mouth.

"Yes, books! Cicero and Ovid have told us that to literature only could they look for consolation in their banishment. But then they speak of a remedy for sorrow, not of a source of joy. No young man should dare to neglect literature. At some period of his life he will surely need consolation. And he may be certain that should he live to be an old man, there will be none other,—except religion. But for that feeling of self-contentment, which creates happiness—hard work, and hard work alone, can give it you."

"Books are hard work themselves sometimes," said Gerald.

"As for money," continued the father, not caring to notice this interruption, "if it be regarded in any other light than as a shield against want, as a rampart under the protection of which you may carry on your battle, it will fail you. I was born a rich man."

"Few people have cared so little about it as you," said the elder son.

"And you, both of you, have been born to be rich." This assertion did not take the elder brother by surprise.

It was a matter of course. But Lord Gerald, who had never as yet heard anything as to his future destiny from his father, was interested by the statement. "When I think of all this,—of what constitutes happiness,—I am almost tempted to grieve that it should be so."

"If a large fortune were really a bad thing," said Gerald, "a man could, I suppose, get rid of it."

"No;—it is a thing of which a man cannot get rid, —unless by shameful means. It is a burden which he must carry to the end."

"Does anybody wish to get rid of it, as Sindbad did of the old man?" asked Gerald pertinaciously. "At any rate I have enjoyed the kidneys."

"You assured us just now that the bread and cheese at Ely were just as good." The Duke as he said this looked as though he knew that he had taken all the wind out of his adversary's sails. "Though you add carriage to carriage, you will not be carried more comfortably."

"A second horse out hunting is a comfort," said Silverbridge.

"Then at any rate don't desire a third for show. But such comforts will cease to be joys when they become matters of course. That a boy who does not see a pudding once a year should enjoy a pudding when it comes I can understand; but the daily pudding, or the pudding twice a day, is soon no more than simple daily bread,—which will or will not be sweet as it shall or shall not have been earned." Then he went slowly to the door, but, as he stood with the handle of it in his hand, he turned round and spoke another word. "When, hereafter, Gerald, you may chance to think of

that bread and cheese at Ely, always remember that you had skated from Cambridge."

The two brothers then took themselves to some remote part of the house where arrangements had been made for smoking, and there they finished the conversation. "I was very glad to hear what he said about you, old boy." This of course came from Silverbridge.

"I did n't quite understand him."

"He meant you to understand that you would n't be like other younger brothers."

"Then what I have will be taken from you."

"There is lots for three or four of us. I do agree that if a fellow has as much as he can spend he ought not to want anything more. Morton was telling me the other day something about the settled estates. I sat in that office with him all one morning. I could not understand it all, but I observed that he said nothing about the Scotch property. You 'll be a laird, and I wish you joy with all my heart. The governor will tell you all about it before long. He 's going to have two eldest sons."

"What an unnatural piece of cruelty to me;—and so unnecessary!"

"Why?"

"He says that a property is no better than a burden. But I 'll try and bear it."

CHAPTER XXVI.

DINNER AT THE BEARGARDEN.

The Duke was in the gallery of the House of Commons which is devoted to the use of peers, and Silverbridge, having heard that his father was there, had come up to him. It was then about half-past five, and the House had settled down to business. Prayers had been read, petitions had been presented, and Ministers had gone through their course of baiting with that equanimity and air of superiority which always belongs to a well-trained occupant of the Treasury Bench.

The Duke was very anxious that his son should attend to his parliamentary duties, but he was too proud a man and too generous to come to the House as a spy. It was his present habit always to be in his own place when the lords were sitting, and to remain there while the lords sat. It was not, for many reasons, an altogether satisfactory occupation, but it was the best which his life afforded him. He would never, however, come across into the other House, without letting his son know of his coming, and Lord Silverbridge had on this occasion been on the look-out, and had come up to his father at once. "Don't let me take you away," said the Duke, "if you are particularly interested in your chief's defence," for Sir Timothy Beeswax was defending some measure of legal reform in which he was said to have fallen into trouble.

"I can hear it up here you know, sir."

"Hardly, if you are talking to me."

"To tell the truth, it 's a matter I don't care much about. They 've got into some mess as to the number of judges and what they ought to do. Finn was saying that they had so arranged that there was one judge who never could possibly do anything."

"If Mr. Finn said so it would probably be so, with some little allowance for Irish exaggeration. He is a clever man, with less of his country's hyperbole than others;—but still not without his share."

"You know him well, I suppose."

"Yes;—as one man does know another in the political world."

"But he is a friend of yours? I don't mean an 'honourable friend,' which is great bosh; but you know him at home."

"Oh yes;—certainly. He has been staying with me at Matching. In public life such intimacies come from politics."

"You don't care very much about him, then?"

The Duke paused a moment before he answered. "Yes I do;—and in what I said just now perhaps I wronged him. I have been under obligations to Mr. Finn,—in a matter as to which he behaved very well. I have found him to be a gentleman. If you come across him in the House I would wish you to be courteous to him. I have not seen him since we came from abroad. I have been able to see nobody. But if ever again I should entertain my friends at my table, Mr. Finn would be one who would always be welcome there." This he said with a sadly serious air, as though wishing that his words should be noted. At the present moment he was remembering that he owed recompense

to Mrs. Finn, and was making an effort to pay the debt. "But your leader is striking out into unwonted eloquence. Surely we ought to listen to him."

Sir Timothy was a fluent speaker, and when there was nothing to be said was possessed of great plenty of words. And he was gifted with that peculiar power which enables a man to have the last word in every encounter,—a power which we are apt to call repartee, which is in truth the readiness which comes from continual practice. You shall meet two men of whom you shall know the one to be endowed with the brilliancy of true genius, and the other to be possessed of but moderate parts, and shall find the former never able to hold his own against the latter. In a debate, the man of moderate parts will seem to be greater than the man of genius. But this skill of tongue, this glibness of speech is hardly an affair of intellect at all. It is, as is style to the writer,—not the wares which he has to take to market, but the vehicle in which they may be carried. Of what avail to you is it to have filled granaries with corn if you cannot get your corn to the consumer? Now Sir Timothy was a great vehicle, but he had not in truth much corn to send. He could turn a laugh against an adversary;—no man better. He could seize, at the moment, every advantage which the opportunity might give him. The Treasury Bench on which he sat and the big box on the table before him were to him fortifications of which he knew how to use every stone. The cheers and the jeers of the House had been so measured by him that he knew the value and force of every sound. Politics had never been to him a study; but to parliamentary strategy he had devoted all his faculties. No one knew so well as

Sir Timothy how to make arrangements for business, so that every detail should be troublesome to his opponents. He could foresee a month beforehand that on a certain day a royal concert would make the House empty, and would generously give that day to a less observant adversary. He knew how to blind the eyes of members to the truth. Those on the opposite side of the House would find themselves checkmated by his astuteness, —when with all their pieces on the board, there should be none which they could move. And this to him was Government! It was to these purposes that he conceived that a great statesman should devote himself! Parliamentary management! That, in his mind, was under this Constitution of ours the one act essential for Government.

In all this he was very great; but when it might fall to his duty either to suggest or to defend any real piece of proposed legislation he was less happy. On this occasion he had been driven to take the matter in hand because he had previously been concerned in it as a lawyer. He had allowed himself to wax angry as he endeavoured to answer certain personal criticisms. Now Sir Timothy was never stronger than when he simulated anger. His mock indignation was perhaps his most powerful weapon. But real anger is a passion which few men can use with judgment. And now Sir Timothy was really angry, and condescended to speak of our old friend Phineas, who had made the onslaught, as a bellicose Irishman. There was an overtrue story as to our friend having once been seduced into fighting a duel, and those who wished to decry him sometimes alluded to the adventure. Sir Timothy had been called to order, but the Speaker had ruled that "bellicose

Irishman" was not beyond the latitude of parliamentary animadversion. Then Sir Timothy had repeated the phrase with emphasis, and the Duke hearing it in the gallery had made his remark as to the unwonted eloquence of his son's parliamentary chief.

"Surely we ought to listen to him," said the Duke. And for a short time they did listen. "Sir Timothy is not a man I like, you know," said the son, feeling himself obliged to apologise for his subjection to such a chief.

"I never particularly loved him myself."

"They say that he is a sort of necessity."

"A conservative fate," said the Duke.

"Well, yes; he is so,—so awfully clever! We all feel that we could not get on without him. When you were in, he was one of your party."

"Oh yes;—he was one of us. I have no right to complain of you for using him. But when you say you could not get on without him, does it not occur to you that should he,—let us say be taken up to heaven,—you would have to get on without him?"

"Then he would be,—out of the way, sir."

"What you mean perhaps is that you do not know how to get rid of him."

"Of course I don't pretend to understand much about it; but they all think that he does know how to keep the party together. I don't think we are proud of him."

"Hardly that."

"He is awfully useful. A man has to look out so sharp to be always ready for those other fellows! I beg your pardon, sir, but I mean your side."

"I understand who the other fellows are."

"And it is n't everybody who will go through such a grind. A man to do it must be always ready. He has so many little things to think of. As far as I can see, we all feel that we could not get along very well without him." Upon the whole the Duke was pleased with what he heard from his son. The young man's ideas about politics were boyish, but they were the ideas of a clear-headed boy. Silverbridge had picked up some of the ways of the place, though he had not yet formed any sound political opinions.

Then Sir Timothy finished a long speech with a flowery peroration, in which he declared that if Parliament were desirous of keeping the realms of her Majesty free from the invasions of foreigners it must be done by maintaining the dignity of the Judicial Bench. There were some clamours at this; and although it was now dinner-time, Phineas Finn, who had been called a bellicose Irishman, was able to say a word or two. "The right honourable gentleman no doubt means," said Phineas, "that we must carry ourselves with some increased external dignity. The world is big-wigging itself, and we must buy a bigger wig than any we have got, in order to confront the world with proper self-respect. Turveydrop and deportment will suffice for us against any odds."

About half-past seven the House became very empty. "Where are you going to dine, sir?" asked Silverbridge. The Duke, with something like a sigh, said he supposed he should dine at home.

"You never were at the Beargarden;—were you, sir?" asked Silverbridge suddenly.

"Never," said the Duke.

"Come and dine with me."

"I am not a member of the club."

"We don't care at all about that. Anybody can take in anybody."

"Does not that make it promiscuous?"

"Well;—no; I don't know that it does. It seems to go on very well. I dare say there are some cads there sometimes. But I don't know where one does n't meet cads. There are plenty in the House of Commons."

"There is something in that, Silverbridge, which makes me think that you have not realised the difference between private and public life. In the former you choose your own associates and are responsible for your choice. In the latter you are concerned with others for the good of the State; and though even for the State's sake you would not willingly be closely allied with those whom you think dishonest, the outward manners and fashions of life need create no barriers. I should not turn up my nose at the House of Commons because some constituency might send them an illiterate shoemaker; but I might probably find the illiterate shoemaker an unprofitable companion for my private hours."

"I don't think there will be any shoemakers at the Beargarden."

"Even if there were I would go and dine with you. I shall be glad to see the place where you, I suppose, pass many hours."

"I find it a very good shop to dine at. The place at the House is so stuffy and nasty. Besides, one likes to get away for a little time."

"Certainly. I never was an advocate for living in the House. One should always change the atmos-

phere." Then they got into a cab and went to the club. Silverbridge was a little afraid of what he was doing. The invitation had come from him on the spur of the moment, and he hardly ventured to think that his father would accept it. And now he did not quite know how the Duke would go through the ceremony. "The other fellows" would all come and stare at a man whom they had all been taught to regard as the most un-Bear-gardenish of men. But he was especially anxious to make things pleasant for his father.

"What shall I order?" said the son as he took the Duke into a dressing-room to wash his hands. The Duke suggested that anything sufficient for his son would certainly be sufficient for him.

Nothing especial occurred during the dinner, which the Duke appeared to enjoy very much. "Yes; I think it is very good soup," he said. "I don't think they ever give me any soup at home." Then the son expressed his opinion that unless his father looked about rather more sharply, "they" very soon would provide no dinner at all, remarking that experience had taught him that the less people demanded the more they were "sat upon." The Duke did like his dinner,—or rather he liked the feeling that he was dining with his son. A report that the Duke of Omnium was with Lord Silverbridge soon went round the room, and they who were justified by some previous acquaintance came up to greet him. To all who did so he was very gracious, and was specially so to Lord Popplecourt, who happened to pass close by the table.

"I think he is a fool," whispered Silverbridge as soon as Popplecourt had passed.

"What makes you think so?"

"We thought him an ass at Eton."

"He has done pretty well, however."

"Oh yes, in a way."

"Somebody has told me that he is a careful man about his property."

"I believe he is all that," said Silverbridge.

"Then I don't see why you should think him a fool."

To this Silverbridge made no reply; partly perhaps because he had nothing to say,—but hindered also by the coming in of Tregear. This was an accident the possibility of which had not crossed him. Unfortunately too the Duke's back was turned, so that Tregear, as he walked up the room, could not see who was sitting at his friend's table. Tregear coming up stood close to the Duke's elbow before he recognised the man, and spoke some word or two to Silverbridge. "How do you do, Mr. Tregear," said the Duke, turning round.

"Oh, my lord, I did not know that it was you."

"You hardly would. I am quite a stranger here. Silverbridge and I came up from the House together, and he has been hospitable enough to give me a dinner. I will tell you an odd thing for a London man, Mr. Tregear. I have not dined at a London club for fifteen years before this."

"I hope you like it, sir," said Silverbridge.

"Very much indeed. Good-evening, Mr. Tregear. I suppose you have to go to your dinner now."

Then they went into one of the rooms upstairs to have coffee, the son declining to go into the smoking-room, and assuring his father that he did not in the least care about a cigar after dinner. "You would

be smothered, sir." The Duke did as he was bidden and went upstairs. There was in truth a strong reason for avoiding the publicity of the smoking-room. When bringing his father to the club he had thought nothing about Tregear but he had thought about Tifto. As he entered he had seen Tifto at a table dining alone, and had bobbed his head at him. Then he had taken the Duke to the farther end of the room, and had trusted that fear would keep the Major in his place. Fear had kept the Major in his place. When the Major learned who the stranger was, he had become silent and reserved. Before the father and son had finished their dinner, Tifto had gone to his cigar; and so that danger was over.

"By George, there 's Silverbridge has got his governor to dinner," said Tifto, standing in the middle of the room, and looking round as though he were announcing some confusion of the heavens and earth.

"Why should n't Lord Silverbridge have his father to dine with him?" asked Mr. Lupton.

"I believe I know Silverbridge as well as any man, and by George, it is the very last thing of the kind that I should have expected. There have been no end of quarrels."

"There has been no quarrel at all," said Tregear, who had then just entered the room. "Nothing on earth would make Silverbridge quarrel with his father, and I think it would break the Duke's heart to quarrel with his son." Tifto endeavoured to argue the matter out; but Tregear having made the assertion on behalf of his friend would not allow himself to be enticed into further speech. Nevertheless there was a good deal said by others, during which the Major drank two

glasses of whiskey and water. In the dining-room he had been struck with awe by the Duke's presence, and had certainly no idea of presenting himself personally to the great man. But Bacchus lent him aid, and when the discussion was over and the whiskey had been swallowed, it occurred to him that he would go upstairs and ask to be introduced.

In the meantime the Duke and his son were seated in close conversation on one of the upstairs sofas. It was a rule at the Beargarden that men might smoke all over the house except in the dining-room;—but there was one small chamber called the library, in which the practice was not often followed. The room was generally deserted, and at this moment the father and son were the only occupants. "A club," said the Duke, as he sipped his coffee, "is a comfortable and an economical residence. A man gets what he wants well served, and gets it cheap. But it has its drawbacks."

"You always see the same fellows," said Silverbridge.

"A man who lives much at a club is apt to fall into a selfish mode of life. He is taught to think that his own comfort should always be the first object. A man can never be happy unless his first objects are outside himself. Personal self-indulgence begets a sense of meanness which sticks to a man even when he has got beyond all hope of rescue. It is for that reason,—among others,—that marriage is so desirable."

"A man should marry, I suppose."

"Unless a man has on his shoulders the burden of a wife and children he should, I think, feel that he has shirked out of school. He is not doing his share of the work of the commonwealth."

"Pitt was not married, sir."

"No;—and a great many other good men have remained unmarried. Do you mean to be another Pitt?"

"I don't intend to be a Prime Minister."

"I would not recommend you to entertain that ambition. Pitt perhaps hardly had time for marriage. You may be more lucky."

"I suppose I shall marry some day."

"I should be glad to see you marry early," said the Duke, speaking in a low voice, almost solemnly, but in his quietest, sweetest tone of voice. "You are peculiarly situated. Though as yet you are only the heir to the property and honours of our family, still, were you married, almost everything would be at your disposal. There is so much which I should only be too ready to give up to you!"

"I can't bear to hear you talking of giving up anything," said Silverbridge energetically.

Then the father looked round the room furtively, and seeing that the door was shut, and that they were assuredly alone, he put out his hand and gently stroked the young man's hair. It was almost a caress,—as though he would have said to himself, "Were he my daughter, I would kiss him." "There is much I would fain give up," he said. "If you were a married man the house in Carlton Terrace would be fitter for you than for me. I have disqualified myself for taking that part in society which should be filled by the head of our family. You who have inherited so much from your mother would, if you married pleasantly, do all that right well." He paused for a moment and then asked a straightforward question, very quickly—"You have never thought of any one yet, I suppose?"

Silverbridge had thought very much of somebody. He was quite aware that he had almost made an offer to Lady Mabel. She certainly had not given him any encouragement; but the very fact that she had not done so allured him the more. He did believe that he was thoroughly in love with Lady Mabel. She had told him that he was too young,—but he was older than Lady Mab herself by a week. She was beautiful;—that was certain. It was acknowledged by all that she was clever. As for blood, of which he believed his father thought much, there was perhaps none better in England. He had heard it said of her,—as he now well remembered, in his father's presence,—that she had behaved remarkably well in trying circumstances. She had no fortune;—everybody knew that; but then he did not want fortune. Would not this be a good opportunity for breaking the matter to his father? "You have never thought of any one?" said the Duke,—again very sweetly, very softly.

"But I have!" Lord Silverbridge as he made the announcement blushed up to the eyes.

Then there came over the father something almost of fear. If he was to be told, how would it be if he could not approve? "Yes I have," said Silverbridge, recovering himself. "If you wish it, I will tell you who it is."

"Nay, my boy;—as to that consult your own feelings. Are you sure of yourself?"

"Oh yes."

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Well;—yes, in part. She has not accepted me, if you mean that. Rather the contrary." Now the Duke would have been very unwilling to say that his son would

certainly be accepted by any girl in England to whom he might choose to offer his hand. But when the idea of a doubt was suggested to him, it did seem odd that his son should ask in vain. What other young man was there who could offer so much, and who was at the same time so likely to be loved for his own sake? He smiled however and was silent. "I suppose I may as well out with it," continued Silverbridge. "You know Lady Mabel Grex?"

"Lady Mabel Grex. Yes;—I know her."

"Is there any objection?"

"Is she not your senior?"

"No sir; no; she is younger than I am."

"Her father is not a man I esteem."

"But she has always been so good!" Then the Duke was again silent. "Have you not heard that, sir?"

"I think I have."

"Is not that a great deal?"

"A very great deal. To be good must of all qualities be the best. She is very beautiful."

"I think so, sir. Of course she has no money."

"It is not needed. It is not needed. I have no objection to make. If you are sure of your own mind——"

"I am quite sure of that, sir."

"Then I will raise no objection. Lady Mabel Grex! Her father, I fear, is not a worthy man. I hear that he is a gambler."

"He is so poor!"

"That makes it worse, Silverbridge. A man who gambles because he has money that he can afford to lose is, to my thinking, a fool. But he who gambles

because he has none, is—well, let us hope the best of him. You may give her my love."

"She has not accepted me."

"But should she do so, you may."

"She almost rejected me. But I am not sure that she was in earnest, and I mean to try again." Just at that moment the door was opened and Major Tifto walked into the room.

END OF VOL. I.

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